



EUROPÄISCHE KOMMISSION - EUROPEAN COMMISSION - COMMISSION EUROPÉENNE

Bessere Kompetenzen für das 21. Jahrhundert Improving competences for the 21st Century Améliorer les compétences pour le XXI^e siècle

MITTEILUNG DER KOMMISSION AN DAS EUROPÄISCHE PARLAMENT, DEN RAT,
DEN EUROPÄISCHEN WIRTSCHAFTS- UND SOZIALAUSSCHUSS UND DEN AUSSCHUSS DER REGIONEN
Bessere Kompetenzen für das 21. Jahrhundert: eine Agenda für die europäische Zusammenarbeit im Schulwesen

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Brüssel, den 3.7.2008
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1 EINLEITUNG

Junge Menschen auf das 21. Jahrhundert vorbereiten

1.1 Der wirtschaftliche und soziale Wandel in der Europäischen Union bringt neue Möglichkeiten und Herausforderungen mit sich. Junge Menschen müssen über ein breiteres Kompetenzspektrum als jemals zuvor verfügen, um sich in einer globalisierten Wirtschaft und in immer vielfältigeren Gesellschaften zu behaupten. Viele werden an Arbeitsplätzen tätig sein, die es jetzt noch nicht gibt. Viele werden umfassende Sprachkenntnisse und interkulturelle sowie unternehmerische Fähigkeiten benötigen. Die Technologie wird die Welt weiterhin auf für uns unvorstellbare Weise verändern. Herausforderungen wie beispielsweise der Klimawandel werden eine radikale Umstellung verlangen. In dieser immer komplexeren Welt werden Kreativität und die Fähigkeit, weiterzulernen und Innovationen vorzunehmen, ebenso viel zählen wie – wenn nicht sogar mehr als – bestimmte Wissensgebiete, die unter Umständen veralten. Lebenslanges Lernen sollte die Norm sein.

1.2 Der Europäische Rat hat wiederholt auf die Schlüsselrolle der allgemeinen und beruflichen Bildung für künftiges Wachstum, langfristige Wettbewerbsfähigkeit und sozialen Zusammenhalt der Union verwiesen. Hierbei ist es entscheidend, das Innovationspotenzial und die Kreativität der europäischen Bürger optimal zu fördern. Das Element „Bildung“ des Wissensdreiecks aus Forschung, Innovation und Bildung sollte gestärkt werden, womit schon früh – in den Schulen – begonnen werden sollte. Die in der Schule vermittelten Kompetenzen und Lernmuster sind wesentlich für den Erwerb neuer Fähigkeiten für neue Arbeitsplätze später im Leben.

1.3 Die Kommission hat festgestellt¹, dass angesichts der Herausforderungen des 21. Jahrhunderts ein neuer Ansatz für die Förderung des Wohlstands vonnöten ist, in dessen Zentrum angemessene *Chancen* der Bürger auf Selbstverwirklichung und die *Teilhabe* an Bildung, Beschäftigung, Gesundheitswesen und sozialer Sicherheit stehen, in einem Kontext der *Solidarität*, des sozialen Zusammenhalts und der Nachhaltigkeit. In diesem Zusammenhang hat die Kommission Investitionen in die Jugend zur zentralen Priorität bestimmt.

1.4 Der Rat ist zu dem Schluss gelangt², dass Wachstum und Wohlstand in Europa von der aktiven Beteiligung aller jungen Menschen abhängen. Es besteht ein enger, direkter Zusammenhang zwischen dem Bildungsniveau, das Kinder in der Pflichtschulzeit erreichen, und ihrer späteren gesellschaftlichen Teilhabe, weiterführenden Bildung und Ausbildung

¹ KOM(2007) 726 endg.

² ABl. C 282 vom 24.11.2007, S.12.

sowie ihrem Gehalt. Jedoch gibt es beim Zugang zu einer qualitativ hoch stehenden Schulbildung bislang keine Chancengleichheit, so dass die Bildungssysteme soziale und wirtschaftliche Ungleichheiten oft noch verstärken.

1.5 Die Bildungsminister haben zugesichert, die Qualität und Gerechtigkeit der Bildungssysteme zu verbessern³. Der Rat hat für 2010 drei Benchmarks mit direktem Bezug zur Schulbildung (für Schulabbruch, Lesekompetenz und Abschluss der Sekundarstufe II) angenommen. Die Fortschritte sind jedoch unzureichend. Daher hat der Europäische Rat die Mitgliedstaaten nachdrücklich aufgefordert, die Zahl junger Menschen mit unzureichenden Lesefähigkeiten und die Zahl der Schulabbrecher erheblich zu senken und das Qualifikationsniveau von Lernenden mit Migrationshintergrund oder aus benachteiligten Gruppen anzuheben⁴.

1.6 Anlässlich der jährlichen Überprüfungen der nationalen Lissabon-Reformprogramme hat die Kommission an mehrere Mitgliedstaaten Empfehlungen zur Verbesserung bestimmter Aspekte ihrer schulischen Bildungssysteme gerichtet.

Zweck dieser Mitteilung

1.7 Die EU sieht sich somit der Herausforderung gegenüber, die Reform der Schulsysteme zu intensivieren, so dass *jeder* junge Mensch sein Potenzial durch verbesserte Zugangs- und Lernmöglichkeiten voll entfalten und sich aktiv an der entstehenden wissensbasierten Wirtschaft beteiligen kann, und die soziale Solidarität zu stärken.

1.8 Die Mitgliedstaaten sind für die Gestaltung und die Inhalte der allgemeinen und beruflichen Bildung verantwortlich. Die auf gemeinsamen Werten basierenden vielfältigen Schulsysteme Europas beinhalten eine große Zahl innovativer und exzellenter Verfahren. Wir sollten diese Vielfalt besser nutzen.

1.9 Die meisten Mitgliedstaaten verfügen inzwischen über Strategien für lebenslanges Lernen, bei denen die Schulbildung eine zentrale Rolle spielt⁵. Sie arbeiten jetzt bei schulpolitischen Fragen enger zusammen. Die Rolle der Union besteht darin, sie durch die Erleichterung des Austauschs von Informationen und bewährten Verfahren zu unterstützen. Die Zusammenarbeit baut auch auf einer Erfahrung von 20 Jahren auf, die im Rahmen des Programms für lebenslanges Lernen und der Vorläuferprogramme gewonnen wurde. Im Kontext dieser laufenden gemeinsamen Arbeit führte die Kommission im Jahr 2007 eine Konsultation der Öffentlichkeit zum Thema „Schulen für das 21. Jahrhundert“ durch⁶.

1.10 Die Mitgliedstaaten anerkennen zunehmend die Vorteile einer Zusammenarbeit, wenn es gilt, gemeinsame Herausforderungen anzugehen; dies wird deutlich in den Empfehlungen zur Bewertung der Qualität der Schulbildung⁷ und zu Schlüsselkompetenzen für

³ ABl. C 298 vom 8.12.2006, S. 3.

⁴ Europäischer Rat, Schlussfolgerungen des Vorsitzes, März 2008, Ziffer 15.

⁵ KOM(2007) 703 endg., Ziffer 2.1.

⁶ SEK(2007)1009. Die Antworten wurden in einem separaten Bericht analysiert, der verfügbar ist unter: http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/consult/index_de.html; sie sind im Arbeitsdokument der Kommissionsdienststellen zusammengefasst.

⁷ 2001/166/EG; ABl. L 60 vom 1.3.2001.

lebensbegleitendes Lernen⁸ sowie in den Schlussfolgerungen des Rates zu Effizienz und Gerechtigkeit⁹ und zur Verbesserung der Qualität der Lehrerbildung¹⁰.

1.11 Die Kommission glaubt, dass die Schulbildung angesichts des gemeinsamen Charakters vieler Herausforderungen, die sich den Schulsystemen stellen, und der Bedeutung dieser Fragen für die sozioökonomische Zukunft der Union einen zentralen Schwerpunkt der nächsten Stufe des Lissabon-Prozesses bilden sollte.

1.12 Dementsprechend wird in der vorliegenden Mitteilung auf der Grundlage der Reaktionen auf die öffentliche Konsultation der Kommission von 2007, der jüngsten Arbeiten der „Peer-learning-Cluster“ von Sachverständigen der Mitgliedstaaten¹¹ und der letzten internationalen Statistiken und Forschungsarbeiten eine Agenda für die Verstärkung der europäischen Zusammenarbeit im Schulwesen vorgeschlagen¹²; darin werden die größten Herausforderungen bestimmt, die sich den Schulsystemen stellen und die am besten durch eine solche Zusammenarbeit bewältigt werden können. Diese entfallen auf drei Bereiche:

- Kompetenzen als Schwerpunkt
- Hochwertiges Lernangebot für alle Schülerinnen und Schüler
- Lehrkräfte und Schulpersonal

2 KOMPETENZEN ALS SCHWERPUNKT

Schlüsselkompetenzen vermitteln

2.1 Der Rat hat auf die Notwendigkeit verwiesen, Menschen mit „neuen Kompetenzen für neue Beschäftigungen“ auszustatten und das allgemeine Qualifikationsniveau anzuheben, durch „Bereitstellung von Erstausbildung und Fortbildung im Hinblick auf Qualifikationen und Kompetenzen von höchster und selbst herausragender Qualität, um die Fähigkeit zur Innovation ..., die für mehr Wettbewerbsfähigkeit, höheres Wachstum und mehr Beschäftigung erforderlich sind [sic], aufrechtzuerhalten und zu verstärken“¹³.

2.2 Bei den Lehrplänen der Schulen geht die Tendenz dahin, den Lernenden beim Erwerb der für reale Lebenssituationen erforderlichen Kenntnisse, Fähigkeiten und Verhaltensmuster zu helfen. Der Europäische Rahmen für Schlüsselkompetenzen¹⁴ beschreibt die Kenntnisse, Fähigkeiten und Verhaltensmuster, die für ein erfolgreiches Leben in einer Wissensgesellschaft erforderlich sind. Er bildet die Grundlage eines kohärenten Ansatzes für die Kompetenzentwicklung in der Schule und der Berufsbildung.

⁸ 2006/962/EG; ABl. L 394 vom 30.12.2006, S. 10.

⁹ ABl. C 298 vom 8.12.2006, S. 3.

¹⁰ ABl. C 300 vom 12.12.2007, S. 7.

¹¹ Cluster für: Schlüsselkompetenzen und Lehrplanreformen; Lehrkräfte und Ausbilder; Zugang und soziale Eingliederung; Mathematik, Naturwissenschaften und Technologie.

¹² Der Begriff „Schule“ bezieht sich im vorliegenden Text auf vorschulische Einrichtungen, Grundschulen, Sekundarschulen (Sekundarbereich I und II) und auch auf Berufsbildungseinrichtungen. Die skizzierten Fragen betreffen zum großen Teil auch die berufliche Erstausbildung und sollten daher in der künftigen Arbeit im Rahmen des Kopenhagen-Prozesses Berücksichtigung finden.

¹³ ABl. C 290 vom 4.12.2007, S. 1.

¹⁴ Empfehlung 2006/962/EG.

2.3 Um Kompetenzen zu erwerben, müssen die Lernenden von früher Kindheit an „lernen, wie man lernt“, indem sie sich mit ihren Lernzielen auseinander setzen, beim Lernen Selbstdisziplin aufbringen, selbständig und mit anderen zusammen arbeiten, sich bei Bedarf um Information und Unterstützung bemühen und sämtliche Möglichkeiten der neuen Technologien nutzen.

2.4 In den Reaktionen auf die Konsultation zu den Schulen wurde zu einem flexibleren Lernumfeld aufgerufen, das den Schülern dabei behilflich ist, eine Reihe von Kompetenzen zu erwerben, aber weiterhin auch auf eine Basis von Grundkenntnissen Wert legt. Die vorgeschlagenen Ansätze beinhalteten neue pädagogische Konzepte, fachübergreifende Ansätze zur Ergänzung des fachspezifischen Unterrichts und eine stärkere Einbindung der Schüler in die Konzeption des eigenen Lernens.

2.5 Eine Reform der Lehrpläne zur Verbesserung der Kompetenzen setzt einen ganzheitlichen Ansatz voraus, der fachspezifisches und fachübergreifendes Lernen, umfassende Kompetenzvermittlung sowie neue Konzepte der Lehrerausbildung und neue didaktische Konzepte vereint und – was ganz entscheidend ist – Lehrkräfte, Lernende und andere Akteure voll einbezieht. Ebenso sollten die Schulen Gesundheit und Wohlbefinden von Schülern und Schulpersonal sowie eine aktive Staatsbürgerschaft (auch im europäischen Kontext) fördern. Der Erwerb von Kompetenzen, unter anderem durch die Erziehung zum Unternehmergeist¹⁵ und den Fremdspracherwerb, kann in einem schulischen Umfeld gefördert werden, in dem Lehrkräfte und Lernende zu Innovation und Kreativität angeregt werden.

Lesen, Schreiben und Rechnen

2.6 Die Grundfertigkeiten Lesen, Schreiben und Rechnen sind wesentliche Bestandteile der Schlüsselkompetenzen. Obwohl sie für das weitere Lernen von grundlegender Bedeutung sind, hat sich der Kenntnisstand in der EU verschlechtert. Die EU-Benchmark für 2010 sieht eine Verringerung des Anteils der 15-Jährigen mit geringer Lesekompetenz auf 17 % vor. Jedoch ist die Quote tatsächlich von 21,3 % im Jahr 2000 auf 24,1 % im Jahr 2006 angestiegen. Ferner verfügen fast zweimal so viele Jungen wie Mädchen über unzureichende Lesefähigkeiten: 17,6 % der 15-jährigen Mädchen und 30,4 % der 15-jährigen Jungen. Der Rückgang bei der Lesekompetenz muss dringend ins Gegenteil verkehrt werden. Dies stellt eine der wichtigsten Herausforderungen dar, denen sich Europas Schulen derzeit gegenübersehen.

2.7 Die Lesekompetenz hängt von verschiedenen Faktoren ab: Lesekultur in der Familie, Muttersprache, pädagogische Methoden von Eltern und Schule sowie Auswirkung einer bildbasierten multimedialen Kultur. Zu den bewährten Verfahren zählen hier Strategien zur Förderung der Sprachkompetenz von Familien, frühzeitige fachliche Unterstützung (bereits ab der Vorschule), nationale Strategien und Zielvorgaben für Lesekompetenz sowie Verbesserungen der Leseinfrastruktur (Bibliotheken, Unterrichtsmaterial).

2.8 Auch Rechenkompetenz, Mathematik- und Computerkenntnisse sowie naturwissenschaftliches Verständnis sind für die uneingeschränkte Teilhabe an der Wissensgesellschaft und für die Wettbewerbsfähigkeit der modernen Volkswirtschaften von

¹⁵ Mitteilung der Kommission „Förderung des Unternehmergeistes in Unterricht und Bildung“, KOM(2006) 33 endg.

größter Wichtigkeit. Dabei sind die ersten Erfahrungen von Kindern entscheidend, jedoch haben die Schüler häufig Angst vor Mathematik, so dass einige bewusst andere Bildungswege einschlagen, um sie zu vermeiden. Verschiedene pädagogische Ansätze können die Verhaltensmuster positiv beeinflussen, das Bildungsniveau anheben helfen und neue Lernmöglichkeiten eröffnen¹⁶.

Personalisierte Lernansätze

2.9 Jeder Lernende hat unterschiedliche Bedürfnisse. Jeder Unterrichtsraum ist ein Ort der Vielfalt: in Bezug auf Geschlecht, sozioökonomische Gruppen, Fähigkeiten und Defizite, Muttersprachen und Lernstile. Eine Verbesserung der Kompetenzen bedeutet, die Lernenden stärker personenbezogen zu unterrichten.

2.10 Durch eine bessere Abstimmung des Unterrichts auf die Bedürfnisse jedes Kindes können das Interesse und die Beteiligung der Schüler an den Lernaktivitäten erhöht und ihre Ergebnisse verbessert werden; jedoch sollten die Vorzüge dieses Vorgehens allen Schülern in gleichem Maße zugute kommen.

2.11 Eine frühzeitige Ermittlung der individuellen Schwierigkeiten und umfassende Präventionsstrategien in der Schule sind die wichtigsten Verfahren zur Verringerung der Zahl der Schulabbrecher. Lehrkräfte benötigen eine spezielle Ausbildung, um in verschiedenen Unterrichtsräumen effektiv arbeiten zu können. Flexiblere Bildungs- und Ausbildungswege können dem vorzeitigen Schulabgang entgegenwirken und sicherstellen, dass alle Schüler auf lebenslanges Lernen vorbereitet sind.

Lernergebnisse beurteilen

2.12 Die Forschung zeigt, dass eine ausdrückliche Ausrichtung der Beurteilung auf die Lernförderung zu den wirkungsvollsten Instrumenten gehört, wenn es gilt, die Standards, insbesondere bei den Schülern mit schlechten Leistungen, anzuheben und zum lebenslangen Lernen zu befähigen. Jedoch wird die Beurteilung häufig nur dazu verwendet, Schüler einzustufen, und nicht dazu, ihnen dabei zu helfen, sich zu verbessern; Tests bewerten nicht immer, über welche Kompetenzen die Schüler verfügen, sondern nur, an welche Informationen sie sich erinnern können.

2.13 Eine Verbesserung der Kompetenzen impliziert eine umfassendere Nutzung der formativen¹⁷ Beurteilung für die frühzeitige Ermittlung und Behandlung von Problemen, sowie die Entwicklung anspruchsvollerer Techniken für die summative¹⁸ Beurteilung auf der Grundlage vereinbarter Standards für Lernergebnisse. Die Lehrkräfte verfügen bei der Beurteilung der Schüler über beträchtliche Autonomie; ihre Ausbildung muss sich mit diesen Fragen befassen.

¹⁶ Die Förderung von naturwissenschaftlichem Unterricht und Mathematikunterricht ist ein Ziel des Siebten EU-Forschungsrahmenprogramms; das Augenmerk liegt dabei auf Lehrmethoden in Schulen, die forschend-entdeckendes und problembasiertes Lernen ermöglichen, und auf dem Austausch bewährter Verfahren.

¹⁷ Eine Feedback umfassende Beurteilung, die dazu verwendet wird, den Unterricht an die Bedürfnisse des Lernenden anzupassen und dem Lernenden dabei zu helfen, über seine Fortschritte nachzudenken.

¹⁸ Zusammenfassung des Lernens, das zu einer bestimmten Zeit stattgefunden hat.

Um die Mitgliedstaaten bei der Umsetzung der Empfehlung zu den Schlüsselkompetenzen für lebenslanges Lernen zu unterstützen, schlägt die Kommission vor, die künftige Zusammenarbeit auf Folgendes zu konzentrieren:

- **Erstellung von Aktionsplänen zur Verbesserung der Lese- und Rechenkompetenz, einschließlich der Verwendung von Zielvorgaben,**
- **Erweiterung von fachübergreifenden wie auch fachspezifischen Kompetenzen, insbesondere der Lernkompetenz, und**
- **Anwendung eines umfassenden Ansatzes für die Kompetenzentwicklung, der sich erstreckt auf Lehrpläne, Lernmaterialien, Lehrerausbildung, personalisiertes Lernen und Beurteilungsverfahren.**

3 HOCHWERTIGES LERNANGEBOT FÜR ALLE SCHÜLERINNEN UND SCHÜLER

3.1 Alle jungen Menschen mit sämtlichen Kompetenzen für das Leben auszustatten, stellt eine Herausforderung in puncto Gerechtigkeit dar. Kein Schulsystem bietet allen Schülern genau dieselben Bildungschancen. Das Qualitätsgefälle zwischen den Schulen sollte ausgeglichen werden. Vor kurzem durchgeführte Forschungsarbeiten zeigen, dass geringe Unterschiede bei den Leistungsergebnissen der Schüler mit einem hohen Leistungsdurchschnitt einhergehen können; dabei wird den politischen Entscheidungsträgern vorgeschlagen, die Disparitäten zu verringern und die Beteiligung der Schüler mit niedrigerem Leistungsniveau zu verbessern. Die EU-Benchmark sieht vor, dass bis 2010 mindestens 85 % der jungen Menschen die Sekundarstufe II abgeschlossen haben sollten. Für 2007 beträgt die Quote bei den 20- bis 24-Jährigen durchschnittlich 78,1 %, was einer Verbesserung um lediglich 1,5 Prozentpunkte seit 2000 entspricht.

3.2 Der Europäische Rat kam auf seiner Frühjahrstagung 2006 zu dem Schluss, dass „zügiger Reformen durchgeführt werden müssen, damit qualitativ hochwertige Bildungssysteme entstehen, die sowohl effizient als auch gerecht sind“¹⁹. Hierbei besteht weiterhin die Notwendigkeit, die Wechselbeziehung zwischen sozioökonomischem Hintergrund und Bildungsergebnissen der Lernenden besser zu erfassen und zu verringern.

3.3 In den Reaktionen auf die Konsultation zu den Schulen wurde auf die Bedeutung von Lernangeboten für Vorschulkinder und von integrativen Schulsystemen verwiesen, in denen Schüler mit unterschiedlichem Hintergrund gemeinsam in Regelschulen unterrichtet werden, benachteiligte Schüler und Schüler mit besonderen Bedürfnissen aber zusätzliche Unterstützung erhalten.

Bessere Lernangebote für Vorschulkinder

3.4 Vorschulerziehung kann die Bildungsbenachteiligungen von Kindern aus einkommensschwachen Gruppen und Minderheitengruppen verringern. Sie kann das Erlernen der Unterrichtssprache oder einer zweiten Sprache unterstützen. Frühzeitig einsetzende, intensive, multisystemische Ansätze führen zu beeindruckenden langfristigen Ergebnissen und können während des gesamten Prozesses des lebenslangen Lernens den höchsten Ertrag,

¹⁹ Europäischer Rat, Schlussfolgerungen des Vorsitzes, März 2006.

insbesondere für die am stärksten benachteiligten Gruppen, erbringen. Es gibt Belege dafür, dass Vorschulerziehung das durchschnittliche Bildungsniveau, die Aufmerksamkeit und die Beteiligung der Kinder am Unterricht in der Grundschule erhöht. Bildung im frühen Kindesalter sollte nicht nur auf intellektuelle Leistungen, sondern auch auf soziale und emotionale Betreuung gerichtet sein, ebenso sollte sie mit Sozialarbeit im weitesten Sinne verknüpft sein. Das Personal benötigt eine Fachausbildung und Fachqualifikationen.

3.5 In den Mitgliedstaaten besteht die Tendenz, die Vorschulerziehung und -betreuung auf alle Kinder auszudehnen. Der Rat kam im Jahr 2002 überein, dass die Mitgliedstaaten für mindestens 90 % der Kinder zwischen 3 Jahren und dem Schulpflichtalter und für mindestens 33 % der Kinder unter 3 Jahren Betreuungsplätze zur Verfügung stellen sollten²⁰. In der Zeit von 2000 bis 2005 stieg der Anteil der an der Vorschulbildung teilnehmenden 4-Jährigen um 3 Prozentpunkte auf über 85 %, jedoch bestehen weiterhin große Unterschiede: die Teilnahmequoten reichen von mehr als 99 % in einigen Ländern bis zu weniger als 50 % in anderen Ländern²¹. Eine Verbesserung des Betreuungsangebots und ein erweiterter Zugang dazu sind möglicherweise die wichtigsten Beiträge, die die Schulsysteme zur Verbesserung der Chancen für alle und zur Erreichung der Ziele von Lissabon leisten können.

Die Gerechtigkeit der Systeme fördern

3.6 Forschungsergebnissen zufolge setzen die erfolgreichsten schulischen Bildungssysteme hohe Erwartungen in alle Schüler, insbesondere in diejenigen, die zuhause andere Erfahrungen machen. Die Systeme sollten sicherzustellen versuchen, dass kein „Versagen“ als endgültig betrachtet wird und kein Schüler/keine Schülerin die Schule in dem Glauben verlässt, er/sie sei „unfähig“ zu lernen.

3.7 Strategien, die auf die Bedürfnisse jedes Einzelnen abgestimmte flexible Lernwege sichern wollen, können zur Förderung der Systemgerechtigkeit beitragen. Dies impliziert, dass Lernwege nicht in Sackgassen enden, dass die Orientierungssysteme verstärkt und die Übertragungsmöglichkeiten zwischen verschiedenen Bildungsstufen und -bereichen (z. B. zwischen Berufs- und Hochschulbildung) verbessert werden.

3.8 Der Rat hat festgestellt, „dass es einigen Forschungsergebnissen zufolge in bestimmten Fällen wohl negative Auswirkungen auf die Leistungen benachteiligter Schüler haben kann, wenn die Schüler in zu frühem Alter je nach ihren Fähigkeiten auf gesonderte Schulen unterschiedlicher Art verteilt werden“²². Der Großteil der verfügbaren Erkenntnisse deutet darauf hin, dass sich durch eine frühe Differenzierung, also die frühzeitige Aufteilung der Schüler auf verschiedene Schultypen, die auf den sozialen Hintergrund zurückzuführenden Unterschiede beim Bildungsniveau noch stärker ausprägen können. Hierbei handelt es sich um ein komplexes Phänomen, wobei Spielraum für eine Zusammenarbeit der Mitgliedstaaten besteht, um so die richtige Mischung von Abhilfemaßnahmen zu ermitteln.

3.9 In einigen Schulsystemen wiederholen bis zu 25 % der Schüler zu irgendeinem Zeitpunkt ein Schuljahr, in anderen Systemen tritt dieser Fall selten ein. Dabei handelt es sich um ein kostspieliges Verfahren. Manche Wiederholer können ihren Rückstand zwar aufholen, die große Mehrheit jedoch nicht. Die Wiederholungsquoten sind bei Kindern aus

²⁰ Europäischer Rat in Barcelona, Schlussfolgerungen des Vorsitzes, März 2002.

²¹ KOM(2007) 703 endg.

²² ABl. C 298 vom 8.12.2006, S. 3.

benachteiligten sozioökonomischen Gruppen wesentlich höher, das Bildungsniveau der Wiederholer ist langfristig oft niedriger als das der schwachen Schüler, die das Schuljahr nicht wiederholt haben. Einige Länder setzen stattdessen auf eine formative Beurteilung, kombiniert mit kurzfristigen Intensivmaßnahmen oder Einzelunterricht mit Hilfspersonal. Die Lehrkräfte benötigen eine Schulung in den entsprechenden Techniken.

3.10 Eine durch persönliche, soziale, kulturelle oder wirtschaftliche Umstände verursachte Benachteiligung kann die Bildung der Kinder behindern und stellt eine zentrale Herausforderung für die Schulsysteme in der EU dar. Armut beeinträchtigt die kognitive Entwicklung einzelner Schüler und letzten Endes ihre akademische Leistung. Benachteiligte Kinder haben schlechtere Aussichten, die Schule erfolgreich zu absolvieren, gesund zu bleiben, in den Arbeitsmarkt und die Gesellschaft integriert zu werden sowie nicht straffällig zu werden²³. Die speziellen Herausforderungen, die sich Schülern mit Migrationshintergrund stellen, werden in einem separaten Kommissionspapier²⁴ behandelt.

3.11 Die Schule allein kann die soziale Benachteiligung der Schüler nicht ausgleichen. Lösungen setzen Partnerschaften unter Beteiligung von Familien, Sozialdiensten, Stadtverwaltungen und Gesundheitsdiensten voraus, um so die Vererbung von Armut und Ausgrenzung an die nächste Generation zu unterbinden.

3.12 Bei Schulen mit hohen Abbrecherquoten besteht oft die Tendenz zu einem häufigen Lehrerwechsel, was ihre Probleme noch verschärft. Die Minister kamen überein, ein hochwertiges Lehrangebot in benachteiligten Gebieten besonders zu fördern²⁵. Finanzhilfen für Schulen, die benachteiligte Schüler aufnehmen, könnten die Unterschiede bei der sozialen Zusammensetzung in den Schulen vielleicht verringern.

Schulabbruch

3.13 Schulabbruch, d. h. der vorzeitige Abgang von der Schule, bedeutet Vergeudung von Potenzial. Er verursacht soziale Kosten (sozialer Zusammenbruch, verstärkte Inanspruchnahme des Gesundheitssystems und geringerer sozialer Zusammenhalt) und wirtschaftliche Kosten (geringere Produktivität, niedrigeres Steueraufkommen und höhere Sozialhilfeleistungen). Zu den Kosten für den Einzelnen gehören geringe Qualifikation, Arbeitslosigkeit, niedrigere Einkünfte während des gesamten Lebens, geringere Beteiligung am Lernen im fortgeschrittenen Alter und geringere Fähigkeit zur Anpassung an den Wandel.

3.14 In ihrem Lissabon-Bericht über Wachstum und Arbeitsplätze von 2007 hat die Kommission an mehrere Mitgliedstaaten spezielle Empfehlungen bezüglich der Steigerung ihrer Leistung beim Abbau des Schulabbruchs gerichtet. Die einzelstaatlichen Schulabbrecherquoten weisen zwar beträchtliche Unterschiede auf, doch stehen sie immer ganz deutlich mit einer Benachteiligung in Verbindung. Kinder aus mehrfach sozial benachteiligten Familien sind in allen Ländern unter den Schulabbrechern überrepräsentiert²⁶, ebenso die am stärksten benachteiligten Gebiete.

3.15 Verstärkte politische Anstrengungen und Ressourcen, die über die Europäischen Strukturfonds bereitgestellt werden, tragen inzwischen zu einer Verbesserung der Lage bei,

²³ Europäischer Rat, *Gemeinsamer Bericht über Sozialschutz und soziale Eingliederung* 2007, S. 5.

²⁴ KOM(2008) 423.

²⁵ ABl. C 298 vom 8.12.2006, S. 3.

²⁶ SEK(2007) 1284, Ziffer 1.1.2.

jedoch geht die Entwicklung zu langsam voran. Die EU-Benchmark für 2010 sieht vor, dass durchschnittlich höchstens 10 % der jungen Menschen vorzeitig von der Schule abgehen sollten. Im Jahr 2007 betrug die EU-Quote für die 18- bis 24-Jährigen im Durchschnitt noch 14,8 %, d. h. sie lag um 2,8 Prozentpunkte niedriger als 2000. Die Minister haben 2008 Maßnahmen zur Bekämpfung des Schulabbruchs erörtert, unter anderem: Verbesserung der Kompetenzen von Neuzuwanderern in der Unterrichtssprache und andere Qualifizierungsmaßnahmen, um so das Niveau Gleichaltriger zu erreichen; frühzeitige Ermittlung der gefährdeten Schüler und Förderung der Zusammenarbeit zwischen deren Eltern und Lehrkräften; Bereitstellung von außerschulischen Lernangeboten; mehr Kontinuität bei der Unterstützung während des Übergangs von einer Schulstufe zur nächsten.

3.16 „Schulen der zweiten Chance“ sind zwar wichtig, jedoch bedarf es auch einer engeren Zusammenarbeit zwischen den Sektoren der allgemeinen und der beruflichen Bildung und einer Aktion zur Steigerung der Attraktivität der Regelschulen.

Sonderpädagogischer Förderbedarf

3.17 Schüler mit sonderpädagogischem Förderbedarf bevorzugen meist integrative Bildungsangebote; entsprechende Ansätze können für alle Schülerinnen und Schüler von Nutzen sein²⁷. Trotz ernsthafter politischer Absichten werden noch immer mehr als 2 % der Schüler in der EU aufgrund ihres sonderpädagogischen Förderbedarfs in Sondereinrichtungen unterrichtet.

3.18 Die Herbeiführung von Integration bei gleichzeitiger Unterstützung von Schülern mit besonderen Bedürfnissen impliziert ein Überdenken der Organisation der Lernunterstützung, die Verbesserung der Zusammenarbeit zwischen Schulen und anderen Diensten und die Verwirklichung personalisierten Lernens. Eine rechtzeitige und flexible Unterstützung kann Schülern mit vorübergehenden Lern- und Anpassungsproblemen dabei helfen, ihren Rückstand aufzuholen, ohne sie an eine Sondereinrichtung zu verweisen.

Schulentwicklung

3.19 Schulen müssen in der Lage sein, sich ständig ihrem im Wandel begriffenen Umfeld und den wechselnden Bedürfnissen von Schülern, Lehrpersonal und Eltern, ihren wichtigsten Partnern, anzupassen.

3.20 In vielen Ländern befindet sich die Rolle der Schulaufsicht im Wandel: weg von der Kontrolle, hin zur Unterstützung und Anregung von Verbesserungen. Die Vernetzung von Schulen (z. B. Comenius-Schulpartnerschaften oder eTwinning) kann die Innovation beschleunigen. Eine systemische und periodische Selbstevaluierung unterstützt die Schulen effektiv dabei, festzustellen, in welche Richtung der Wandel gehen soll. Der Rat ist zu dem Ergebnis gelangt, dass Schulen sich zu „Lerngemeinschaften“ entwickeln sollten²⁸. Immer mehr Schulen öffnen ihre Einrichtungen auch für die örtliche Bevölkerung und stellen engere Verbindungen zu den örtlichen Unternehmen her.

3.21 In jüngster Zeit wurden in Europa viele verschiedene Reformen mit dem Ziel durchgeführt, die Autonomie der Schulen zu stärken. Hier muss noch mehr Arbeit in

²⁷ *Integrative und inklusive Unterrichtspraxis im Sekundarschulbereich*, Europäische Agentur für Entwicklungen in der sonderpädagogischen Förderung, Zusammenfassender Bericht, 2005.

²⁸ ABl. C 300 vom 12.12.2007, S. 7.

folgenden Bereichen geleistet werden: Qualitätsvorteile verschiedener Autonomieformen, ihre Verbindungen zur Schülerleistung, externe Prüfungen, Rechenschaftspflicht und Wahlmöglichkeiten sowie Nutzung verstärkter Autonomie zur Herbeiführung von mehr Systemgerechtigkeit.

Um die Mitgliedstaaten bei der Umsetzung der Schlussfolgerungen des Rates zu Effizienz und Gerechtigkeit in der allgemeinen und beruflichen Bildung zu unterstützen, schlägt die Kommission vor, die künftige Zusammenarbeit auf Folgendes zu konzentrieren:

- **Ausweitung des Zugangs zu einer hochwertigen Vorschulerziehung auf alle Kinder,**
- **Messung und Verbesserung der Gerechtigkeitwirkung der Schulsysteme und Verringerung der Qualitätsunterschiede zwischen Schulen,**
- **durch die Schulsysteme gewährleistete Erleichterung eines erfolgreichen Übergangs zwischen verschiedenen Schultypen und -stufen sowie zur (beruflichen) Weiterbildung,**
- **Verringerung des Schulabbruchs und**
- **Bereitstellung frühzeitiger Unterstützung und personalisierter Lernansätze an Regelschulen für Schüler mit besonderen Bedürfnissen.**

4 LEHRKRÄFTE UND SCHULPERSONAL

Kompetenzen und Qualifikationen von Lehrkräften

4.1 Die Qualität der Lehrkräfte bildet den wichtigsten innerschulischen Faktor mit Auswirkung auf die Leistungen der Schüler. Somit ist sie für die Erreichung der Ziele von Lissabon von größter Bedeutung. Im Lehrberuf gibt es einen hohen Anteil älterer Arbeitskräfte; etwa 30 % der Lehrkräfte sind älter als 50 Jahre, und etwa zwei Millionen Lehrer werden in den nächsten 15 Jahren ersetzt werden müssen, wenn die Zahlen auf dem jetzigen Stand gehalten werden sollen. Das Personal muss befähigt sein, jedem Schüler angemessene Möglichkeiten zum Erwerb der Kompetenzen einzuräumen, die in einem auf gegenseitigem Respekt und Zusammenarbeit beruhenden sicheren und attraktiven schulischen Umfeld erforderlich sind, das soziales, körperliches und geistiges Wohlbefinden fördert und in dem kein Raum für Mobbing und Gewalt ist²⁹. Doch berichten die meisten Länder über Defizite bei den pädagogischen Fähigkeiten. Trotzdem sind nur wenige Anreizmaßnahmen und Investitionen für fortlaufende berufliche Weiterbildung und Entwicklung zu verzeichnen. Generell wird nur sehr wenig Zeit auf berufsbegleitende Weiterbildung verwendet, und in vielen Mitgliedstaaten werden Junglehrer nicht systematisch unterstützt.

4.2 Die Minister kamen 2007 überein, die Attraktivität des Lehrberufs als Berufswahl zu verbessern und für eine Erstausbildung, eine Unterstützung für Berufseinsteiger („Einführung“) und eine weitere berufliche Entwicklung zu sorgen, die koordiniert und kohärent sind, für die angemessene Mittel zur Verfügung stehen und die einer

²⁹ Ibidem.

Qualitätssicherung unterliegen. Die Lehrkräfte sollten während ihres gesamten Berufslebens ausreichend ermutigt und dabei unterstützt werden, ihre Lernbedürfnisse zu überprüfen und neue Kenntnisse, Fertigkeiten und Kompetenzen, auch in Fremdsprachen, zu erwerben.

4.3 In den Reaktionen auf die Konsultation zu den Schulen wird die Notwendigkeit herausgestellt, das Gleichgewicht zwischen Theorie und Praxis in der Erstausbildung der Lehrer zu verbessern und das Lehren als auf Problemlösung oder Forschung in Aktion (*research in action*) gerichtete Tätigkeit zu präsentieren, die eine engere Verbindung zum Lernen und zu den Fortschritten von Kindern aufweist. Dem Personal sollte Zeit für – später akkreditierte – Weiterbildung und berufliche Entwicklung eingeräumt werden. In einigen Ländern wurden die Arbeitsbedingungen von Lehrkräften, einschließlich ihrer Gehälter, als zentrale Fragen genannt.

4.4 Vor kurzem durchgeführte Forschungsarbeiten zeigen Folgendes: Die Bildungssysteme mit den besten Leistungen können die qualifiziertesten Bewerber für den Lehrberuf gewinnen; verwenden wirksame Verfahren, um die richtigen Lehramtsanwärter auszuwählen und schlechte Leistungen einzudämmen; verfügen über einen die gesamte Laufbahn umspannenden, praktischen Lehrerbildungsansatz; schaffen ein schulisches Umfeld, in dem Lehrkräfte voneinander lernen.

Schulleitung

4.5 Schulen sind zunehmend komplexe und autonome Einrichtungen. Eine wirksame Schulleitung setzt vielfältige Fähigkeiten voraus. Hierbei besteht eine Tendenz zu stärker kooperativ ausgerichteten Managementstilen und verteilter Leitung, die enger mit Schulgovernance in Verbindung stehen. Dafür werden mehr Lehrkräfte und Ausbilder benötigt, die ihre Führungsqualitäten weiterentwickeln konnten³⁰. Die Leitungsfunktionen sind mit immer größeren Belastungen verbunden; in vielen Mitgliedstaaten ist es schwierig, Schulleiter zu finden.

4.6 Jüngste Erkenntnisse lassen auf Folgendes schließen: Im Mittelpunkt sollten wieder Schulleitungsaufgaben stehen, die am effektivsten zu Lernerfolgen von Schülern beitragen können; durch die Verteilung der Leitungsaufgaben kann die Effektivität der Schule verbessert werden; die mit der Schulleitung Befassten benötigen während ihrer gesamten Laufbahn eine angemessene Schulung und Vorbereitung; die Einstellung und Weiterbeschäftigung von Schulleitern sollte in professionelle Hände gelegt werden³¹.

³⁰ Cluster „Lehrkräfte und Ausbilder“: Wichtigste politische Schlussfolgerungen 2005 – 2007.

³¹ *Improving School Leadership*, OECD 2008.

Um die Mitgliedstaaten bei der Umsetzung der Schlussfolgerungen des Rates zur Verbesserung der Qualität der Lehrerbildung zu unterstützen, schlägt die Kommission vor, die künftige Zusammenarbeit auf Folgendes zu konzentrieren:

- **Gewährleistung von Erstausbildung, Unterstützung für Berufseinsteiger und fortlaufender beruflicher Weiterbildung, die koordiniert und kohärent sind, für die angemessene Mittel zur Verfügung stehen und die einer Qualitätssicherung unterliegen; Verbesserung von Angebot, Qualität und Inanspruchnahme von berufsbegleitender Lehrerbildung,**
- **Überprüfung der Einstellungsverfahren für Lehrkräfte, um so die geeignetsten Bewerber anzusprechen, die besten Anwärter auszuwählen und gute Lehrer für Schulen zu gewinnen, in denen die Herausforderungen besonders groß sind, und**
- **Verbesserung der Einstellungsverfahren für Schulleiter und Fokussierung ihrer Tätigkeit darauf, zu den Lernerfolgen der Schüler und zur Weiterentwicklung des Schulpersonals beizutragen.**

5 FAZIT

5.1 In der vorliegenden Mitteilung werden die Bereiche bestimmt, in denen – mitunter radikale – Veränderungen vorgenommen werden müssen, damit Europas Schulen jungen Menschen das volle Rüstzeug für das Leben in diesem Jahrhundert mitgeben können. Die Systeme in der EU beinhalten ein beeindruckendes Spektrum von Innovationen und herausragenden Strategien und Verfahren, die jedoch allzu oft auf einzelne Staaten beschränkt sind. Die Mitgliedstaaten sollten zusammenarbeiten, um dieses Potenzial besser zu nutzen.

5.2 Dementsprechend schlägt die Kommission eine Agenda für die Zusammenarbeit bei den Fragen vor, die in den drei umrandeten Zusammenfassungen weiter oben dargelegt sind, wobei besonders im Mittelpunkt stehen sollte, wie das Leistungsniveau bei den Fragen zu verbessern ist, die vom Europäischen Rat hervorgehoben wurden, also beispielsweise Verbesserung der Schreib- und Lesekompetenz, Erweiterung des Zugangs zur Vorschulbildung und Intensivierung der Lehrerbildung. Ein Austausch über diese Kooperationsagenda sollte im Rahmen der offenen Methode der Koordinierung in der allgemeinen und beruflichen Bildung stattfinden und vom Programm für lebenslanges Lernen gefördert werden; zugleich sollte auf die wichtigsten Herausforderungen in den nationalen Lissabon-Reformprogrammen verwiesen werden.



COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES

Brussels, 3.7.2008
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**COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN
PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL
COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS**

**Improving competences for the 21st Century:
An Agenda for European Cooperation on Schools**

{SEC(2008) 2177}

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**COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN
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**Improving competences for the 21st Century:
An Agenda for European Cooperation on Schools**

1 INTRODUCTION

Preparing young people for the 21st century

1.1 Economic and social changes in the European Union bring new opportunities and challenges. Young people need a wider range of competences than ever before to flourish, in a globalised economy and in increasingly diverse societies. Many will work in jobs that do not yet exist. Many will need advanced linguistic, intercultural and entrepreneurial capacities. Technology will continue to change the world in ways we cannot imagine. Challenges such as climate change will require radical adaptation. In this increasingly complex world, creativity and the ability to continue to learn and to innovate will count as much as, if not more than, specific areas of knowledge liable to become obsolete. Lifelong learning should be the norm.

1.2 The European Council has repeatedly stressed the key role of education and training for the future growth, long-term competitiveness and social cohesion of the Union. To achieve this it is crucial fully to develop the potential for innovation and creativity of European citizens. The education element of the knowledge triangle "research-innovation-education" should be strengthened, starting early – in schools. The competences and learning habits acquired at school are essential for developing new skills for new jobs later in life.

1.3 The Commission has stated¹ that to advance well-being in the face of the challenges of the 21st century requires a new approach centred on providing citizens with adequate *opportunities* for self-fulfilment, *access* to education, employment, healthcare and social protection, in a context of *solidarity*, social cohesion and sustainability. In this context, the Commission has identified investing in youth as a key priority.

1.4 The Council has concluded² that Europe's growth and prosperity depend on an active participation by all young people. Children's attainment in compulsory education has a strong direct impact on their later social participation, further education or training, and wages. However, access to high quality school education is uneven, so education systems often compound socio-economic inequalities.

1.5 Education Ministers have pledged to improve the quality and equity of education systems³. The Council has adopted three benchmarks for 2010 that relate directly to school education (on early school leavers, reading literacy and completion of upper secondary education). But progress is insufficient. Accordingly, the European Council has urged

¹ COM(2007)726 final

² OJ 2007/C 282/12 of 24.11.2007

³ OJ 2006/C 298/03 of 8.12.2006

Member States to reduce substantially the number of young people who cannot read properly and the number of early school leavers, and to improve the achievement of learners from a migrant or other disadvantaged background⁴.

1.6 In annual reviews of Lisbon National Reform Programmes, the Commission has made recommendations to several Member States to improve specific aspects of their school education systems.

Purpose of this Communication

1.7 The challenge facing the EU, then, is to strengthen the reform of school systems so that *every* young person can develop his or her full potential, through improved access and opportunities, to become an active participant in the emerging knowledge economy, and to reinforce social solidarity.

1.8 Member States are responsible for the organisation and content of education and training. Europe's diverse school systems, founded upon shared values, contain a host of innovative and excellent practices. We should make better use of this diversity.

1.9 Most Member States now have lifelong learning strategies in which school education is central⁵. They are working together more intensively on school policy issues. The role of the Union is to support them by facilitating the exchange of information and good practice. This cooperation also builds on 20 years' experience under the Lifelong Learning Programme and predecessors. In the context of this ongoing joint work, the Commission in 2007 undertook a public consultation on 'Schools for the 21st Century'⁶.

1.10 Member States increasingly acknowledge the benefits of cooperation to address common challenges as evidenced by Recommendations on Quality Evaluation in School Education⁷ and Key Competences⁸, and Council Conclusions on Efficiency and Equity⁹ and Improving the Quality of Teacher Education¹⁰.

1.11 The Commission believes that, given the common nature of many of the challenges facing school systems and the importance of these issues for the Union's socio-economic future, school education should be a key priority for the next cycle of the Lisbon process.

1.12 Accordingly, this Communication draws on the responses to the Commission's 2007 public consultation, recent work by peer learning 'clusters' of Member State experts¹¹, and the latest international statistics and research, to propose an agenda for strengthening European

⁴ European Council Conclusions March 2008 para. 15

⁵ COM(2007) 703 final, para. 2.1

⁶ SEC(2007)1009. The responses have been analysed in a separate report available at http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/consult/index_en.html and are summarised in the Staff Working Paper

⁷ 2001/166/EC; OJ L 60 of 1.3.2001

⁸ 2006/962/EC; OJ L 394/10 of 30.12.2006

⁹ OJ C 298/03 of 8.12.2006

¹⁰ OJ C 300/07 of 12.12.2007

¹¹ On Key competences and curriculum reform; Teachers and Trainers; Access and social inclusion; Maths, Science and Technology.

cooperation on schools¹² by identifying the major challenges facing systems that can best be tackled by such cooperation. These are divided into three areas:

- Focus on competences
- High quality learning for every student
- Teachers and school staff

2. FOCUS ON COMPETENCES

Implementing key competences

2.1 The Council has stressed the need to equip people with ‘new skills for new jobs’ and to raise overall skills levels, by providing ‘initial and continuing education and training for skills and competences of the highest quality, even excellence, in order to maintain and strengthen their capacity for innovation which is required for greater competitiveness, growth and employment’¹³.

2.2 The trend in school curricula is to help learners acquire knowledge and the skills and attitudes necessary to apply it in real life situations. The European Framework of Key Competences¹⁴ describes the knowledge, skills and attitudes required for a successful life in a knowledge society. It is a basis for a coherent approach to competence development, in school and in vocational training.

2.3 To acquire competences, learners need, from an early age, to ‘learn to learn’ by reflecting critically on their learning aims, managing their learning with self-discipline, working autonomously and collaboratively, seeking information and support when necessary, and using all the opportunities of new technologies.

2.4 The school consultation responses called for a more flexible learning environment that helps students develop a range of competencies, while retaining a grounding in basic skills. Proposed approaches included new pedagogies, cross-curricular approaches to supplement single-subject teaching, and greater involvement of students in the design of their own learning.

2.5 Curricular reform to improve competences needs a holistic approach, organising learning within and across subjects, teaching competences explicitly, new teacher training and didactic approaches, and, vitally, involving teachers, learners and other actors fully. Similarly, schools should promote the health and wellbeing of pupils and staff, and active citizenship (including in its European context). The acquisition of a range of competences, including

¹² ‘School’ in this text refers to pre-primary, primary, lower and upper secondary institutions and also to institutions of vocational training and to pre-school institutions. The issues outlined here apply also in large part to initial vocational education, and should be reflected in future work under the Copenhagen Process.

¹³ OJ 2007/C 290/01 of 4.12.2007

¹⁴ Recommendation 2006/962/EC

entrepreneurship education¹⁵ and languages, can be reinforced in a school environment where staff and students are encouraged to be innovative and creative.

Literacy and Numeracy

2.6 Literacy and numeracy are essential components of key competences. They are fundamental for further learning, but performance in the EU is deteriorating. The EU benchmark is by 2010 to decrease the proportion of 15-year-olds who are low-achievers in reading literacy to 17%. However, the rate actually increased from 21.3% in 2000 to 24.1% in 2006. Moreover, almost twice as many boys as girls have low reading skills: 17.6% of 15 year old girls and 30.4 % of 15 year old boys. The decline in reading literacy must urgently be reversed. This represents one of the key challenges currently facing Europe's schools.

2.7 Reading literacy depends on diverse factors: family reading culture, home language, choice of parental and school pedagogies, and the impact of an image-based multimedia culture. Good policy practices include family literacy policies; early specialist support from pre-primary onwards; national literacy strategies and targets; and improvements in literacy infrastructure (libraries, classroom material).

2.8 Numeracy, mathematical and digital competences and an understanding of science are also vital for full participation in the knowledge society and for the competitiveness of modern economies. Children's first experiences are crucial, but students are too often anxious about maths and some distort their learning choices to avoid it. Different teaching approaches can improve attitudes, raise attainment levels, and open up new learning possibilities¹⁶.

Personalised approaches to learning

2.9 Every learner's needs differ. Every classroom is a place of diversity: of gender, socio-economic groups, ability or disability, mother tongues and learning styles. Improving competences means teaching learners in a more personalised way.

2.10 Better tailoring teaching to each child's needs can increase student interest and engagement in learning activities and improve their results, but its benefits should reach all students equitably.

2.11 Early identification of individual difficulties and comprehensive preventive strategies within the school are the most important ways to reduce numbers leaving early. Teachers require specific training to work effectively in diverse classrooms. More flexible education and training pathways can facilitate the completion of schooling and ensure that all students are prepared for lifelong learning.

Assessing learning outcomes

2.12 Research shows that explicitly designing assessment to promote learning is one of the most powerful tools for raising standards, particularly among low-achieving pupils, and for

¹⁵ See Commission Communication Fostering entrepreneurial mindsets through education and learning COM(2006) 33 final

¹⁶ Support for science and maths education is an objective of the Seventh EU Research Framework Programme; the emphasis is on inquiry- and problem-based teaching techniques in schools and on promoting the exchange of good practice.

empowering lifelong learners. However, assessment is too often used merely to grade pupils, and not to help them improve; tests do not always assess what competences pupils can use, only what information they can remember.

2.13 Improving competences implies a more extensive use of formative¹⁷ assessment to identify and address problems early, and the development of more sophisticated techniques of summative¹⁸ assessment based on agreed standards for learning outcomes. Teachers have considerable autonomy in pupil assessment; their training needs to address these issues.

To support the Member States in implementing the Recommendation on Key Competences for Lifelong Learning, the Commission proposes to focus future cooperation on:

- **developing action plans to increase levels of reading literacy and numeracy, including the use of target-setting;**
- **reinforcing transversal as well as subject-based competences, particularly learning-to-learn; and**
- **adopting a comprehensive approach to competence development, encompassing curricula, learning materials, teacher training, personalised learning, and assessment techniques.**

3 HIGH QUALITY LEARNING FOR EVERY STUDENT

3.1 Providing all young people with the full range of competences for life is an equity challenge. No school system provides exactly the same educational opportunities for all pupils. The quality gap between schools should be closed. Recent research shows that low variation in student achievement scores can go together with high average achievement, and suggests that policy makers should reduce disparities and improve participation by targeting those with lower skill levels. The EU benchmark is that by 2010 at least 85% of young people should have completed upper secondary education. The 2007 average rate for 20-24 year-olds is 78.1%, an improvement of only 1.5 percentage points since 2000.

3.2 The 2006 Spring European Council concluded that reforms must be stepped up to ensure high quality education and training systems that are both efficient and equitable¹⁹. There remains a need to understand better, and reduce, the correlation between learners' socio-economic background and educational outcomes.

3.3 The responses to the school consultation emphasised the importance of early learning opportunities and of inclusive school systems that integrate students from all backgrounds into mainstream education, while giving additional support for disadvantaged students and those with special needs.

¹⁷ Assessment providing feedback used to adapt teaching to meet the learner's needs and to help the learner reflect on his / her progress

¹⁸ Summarises learning that has taken place at a particular time

¹⁹ European Council Conclusions March 2006

Better early learning opportunities

3.4 Pre-school education can reduce the educational disadvantages of children from low-income and minority backgrounds. It can reinforce learning of the language of instruction or of a second language. Early, intensive, multi-systemic approaches offer impressive long-term results and can bring the highest rates of return over the whole lifelong learning process, especially for the most disadvantaged. There is evidence that pre-primary education improves children's average attainment, attention, and participation in class in primary school. Early childhood education should focus not only on academic performance but also on social and emotional care and should be articulated with wider social services. Staff need specialist training and qualifications.

3.5 Member States are tending to generalise pre-primary education and care. The Council in 2002 agreed that Member States should provide childcare to at least 90% of children between 3 years old and the mandatory school age and at least 33% of children under 3 years of age²⁰. Between 2000 and 2005, participation in education by 4-year-olds increased by about 3 percentage points to over 85%, but disparities remain great: from over 99% in some countries to under 50% in others²¹. Improving pre-school provision and widening access to it are potentially the most important contributions that school systems can make to improving opportunities for all and achieving Lisbon goals.

Promoting system equity

3.6 Research indicates that the most successful school education systems build high expectations for all pupils, particularly those who do not experience high expectations at home. Systems should seek to ensure that no 'failure' is seen as definitive and no pupil leaves school believing that he or she is 'unable' to learn.

3.7 Policies that seek to secure flexible learning pathways according to each individual's needs, can help promote system equity. This implies removing "dead ends" in learning pathways, strengthened guidance systems and better possibilities to transfer between different levels of education and between different strands (e.g. between vocational and higher education).

3.8 The Council noted that "there is research evidence to suggest that, in certain cases, differentiating pupils at too early an age into separate schools of different types on the basis of ability may have negative effects on the achievements of disadvantaged pupils".²² The bulk of available evidence indicates that early tracking into different school types can exacerbate differences in pupils' educational attainment due to social background. This is a complex phenomenon and there is scope for Member State cooperation to identify the right mix of policy measures to address it.

3.9 In some school systems, up to 25% of students repeat a year at some point, while in others it is rare. It is an expensive technique. While some repeaters catch up, the vast majority do not. Repetition rates are significantly higher for children from less advantaged socio-economic groups and repeaters' long-term achievements are often lower than for weak students who did not repeat. Some countries instead use formative assessment combined with

²⁰ Presidency Conclusions, Barcelona Council March 2002

²¹ COM(2007) 703 final

²² OJ C 298/3 of 8.12.2006

short, intensive interventions or individual lessons with support staff. Teachers need training in such techniques.

3.10 Disadvantage due to personal, social, cultural or economic circumstances can hinder children's education and is a central challenge for EU school systems. Poverty impairs individuals' cognitive development and, ultimately, their academic achievement. Disadvantaged children are less likely to do well in school, to enjoy good health, to integrate into the labour market and society, and to stay out of the criminal justice system²³. The specific challenges faced by students from a migrant background are addressed in a separate Commission document²⁴.

3.11 School alone cannot compensate for pupils' social disadvantage. Solutions require partnerships involving families, social services, municipalities, and health services, in order to break the transmission of poverty and exclusion to the next generation.

3.12 Schools with high drop out rates tend to have a high turnover of teachers, exacerbating their problems. Ministers have agreed that the provision of high quality teaching in disadvantaged areas should be particularly encouraged²⁵. Financial support to schools attracting disadvantaged pupils might narrow the differences in the social composition of schools.

Early School Leaving

3.13 Early school leaving (ESL) means wasted potential. It has social costs (social breakdown, increased demand on the health system, and lower social cohesion) and economic costs (lower productivity, lower tax revenues and higher welfare payments). The costs to the individual include low skills, unemployment, lower lifetime earnings, lower participation in learning later in life, and less adaptability to change.

3.14 In its 2007 Lisbon report on Growth and Jobs, the Commission made specific recommendations to several Member States to improve their performance in reducing ESL. While Member States' ESL rates differ considerably, the link with disadvantage is always clear. Children from families at multiple social disadvantages are overrepresented among school dropouts in all countries²⁶, as are the most disadvantaged areas.

3.15 Increased policy effort and resources through the European Structural Funds is improving the situation, but progress is too slow. The EU benchmark is that by 2010 on average no more than 10% of young people should leave school early. In 2007 the average EU rate for 18-24 year-olds was still 14.8%, 2.8 percentage points lower than in 2000. Ministers in 2008 discussed measures to combat school drop-out, including: reinforcing newcomers' competences in the language of instruction and other skills in order to reach the level of their peers; identifying early those 'at risk' and fostering collaboration between their parents and teachers; providing after-school learning activities; and improving continuity of support during the transition from one school level to the next.

²³ European Council, *Joint report on social protection and social inclusion* 2007, p.5

²⁴ COM(2008)423

²⁵ OJ C 298/3 of 8.12.2006

²⁶ SEC(2007)1284, para 1.1.2

3.16 While ‘second chance’ schools are important, there needs also to be closer collaboration between the general and vocational education and training sectors, and action to make mainstream schools more attractive.

Special Educational Needs

3.17 Students with special education needs tend to favour inclusive education, and inclusive approaches can bring benefits to all students²⁷. Despite strong political intentions, more than 2% of EU pupils are still taught in segregated settings because of their special educational needs.

3.18 Achieving inclusion whilst supporting those with specific needs implies re-thinking policies for organising learning support, improving collaboration between schools and other services, and implementing personalised learning. Timely and flexible support can help those with temporary learning or adaptation difficulties to catch up, rather than transferring them to a segregated setting.

School development

3.19 Schools need to be able to adapt continuously to their changing environment, and to the changing needs of pupils, staff and parents, their key partners.

3.20 In many countries, the role of school inspection is changing from one of control, to supporting and inciting improvement. School networking (e.g. Comenius school partnerships, or eTwinning) can accelerate innovation. Systemic and cyclical self-evaluation is effective in helping schools identify directions for change. The Council has concluded that schools should develop as ‘learning communities’²⁸. More schools are opening their facilities to the wider local community, and are developing closer links with local enterprise.

3.21 A wide variety of reforms have recently been implemented in Europe to increase the autonomy of schools. More work is needed on the quality benefits of different types of autonomy, their links with student performance, external examinations, accountability and choice and how increased autonomy can be made to serve system equity.

To support Member States in implementing the Council Conclusions on efficiency and equity in education and training, the Commission proposes to focus future cooperation on:

- **generalising access to high quality pre-school education;**
- **measuring and improving the equity impact of school education systems, and reducing quality differences between schools;**
- **ensuring that school systems facilitate successful transitions between different school types and levels, and into further education and training;**
- **reducing early school leaving; and**

²⁷ *Inclusive education and classroom practices in Secondary Education*, European Agency for Developments in Special Needs Education, Summary Report, 2005

²⁸ OJ C 300/07 of 12.12.2007

- **providing more timely support and personalised learning approaches within mainstream schooling for students with special needs.**

4 TEACHERS AND SCHOOL STAFF

Teacher Competences and Qualifications

4.1 Teacher quality is the most important within-school factor affecting student performance. As such, it is vital to the achievement of Lisbon goals. The profession has a high percentage of older workers; some 30% of teachers are over 50, and around two million will need to be replaced in the next 15 years to maintain the size of the teaching workforce. Staff need the skills to give every pupil adequate opportunities to acquire necessary competences in a safe and attractive school environment based on mutual respect and cooperation, which promotes social, physical and mental well-being and where bullying and violence have no place²⁹. Yet most countries report shortfalls in teaching skills. Despite this, incentives for, and investment in, continuous training and development are weak. Generally, time spent on in-service training is minimal and many Member States offer no systematic support for new teachers.

4.2 Ministers agreed in 2007 to make the teaching profession a more attractive career choice, and to improve the quality of teacher education and to provide initial education, early career support (induction) and further professional development that is coordinated, coherent, adequately resourced and quality assured. Teachers should have sufficient incentives throughout their careers to review their learning needs and to acquire new knowledge, skills and competence, including in languages.

4.3 The school consultation responses highlight the need to improve the balance between theory and practice in initial teacher education, and to present teaching as a problem-solving or research-in-action activity linked more to children's learning and progress. Staff should have time for training and professional development and this should be accredited. In some countries, teachers' working conditions, including remuneration, were cited as key issues.

4.4 Recent research shows that the best-performing education systems attract the most able people into the teaching profession; use effective processes to select the right applicants to become teachers and to tackle poor performance; adopt a career-long and practical approach to teacher education; and create school environments in which teachers learn from each other.

School Leadership

4.5 Schools are increasingly complex and autonomous organisations. Their effective leadership requires diverse skills. The trend is for more collaborative management styles and distributed leadership, linked more strongly with school governance. This requires more teachers and trainers who have been able to develop their leadership qualities³⁰. Leadership posts are increasingly onerous; many Member States experience difficulties recruiting school principals.

²⁹ Ibid

³⁰ Cluster 'Teachers and Trainers': Main policy conclusions 2005 – 2007

4.6 Recent evidence suggests that school leadership should re- focus on tasks that are most effective in improving student learning, that distributing school leadership tasks can improve school effectiveness, that those involved in leadership require adequate training and preparation throughout their careers, and that school leader recruitment and retention should be professionalised³¹.

To support Member States in implementing the Council Conclusions on improving the quality of teacher education, the Commission proposes to focus future cooperation on:

- **ensuring that teachers' initial education, induction and ongoing professional development are coordinated, coherent, adequately resourced and quality assured; and improving the supply, quality and take-up of in-service teacher education;**
- **reviewing teacher recruitment to attract the most able candidates, select the best applicants, and place good teachers in challenging schools; and**
- **improving the recruitment of school leaders and equipping them to focus on improving student learning and developing school staff.**

5 CONCLUSION

5.1 This Communication has identified areas where change, sometimes radical, will be needed if Europe's schools are to equip young people fully for life in this century. There is an impressive range of innovation and excellent policy practice in EU systems, but too often still locked behind national borders. Member States should cooperate to capitalise better on it.

5.2 The Commission accordingly proposes an agenda for cooperation about the issues set out in the three summary boxes above, with a particular focus on how to improve performance on issues highlighted by the European Council, such as improving literacy, extending access to pre-school provision, and strengthening teacher education. Exchanges on this cooperation agenda should be undertaken through the Open Method of Coordination in education and training and supported by the Lifelong Learning Programme, while key challenges should be highlighted in Member States' Lisbon National Reform Programmes.

³¹ *Improving School Leadership*, OECD 2008



COMMISSION DES COMMUNAUTÉS EUROPÉENNES

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**COMMUNICATION DE LA COMMISSION AU PARLEMENT EUROPÉEN, AU
CONSEIL, AU COMITÉ ÉCONOMIQUE ET SOCIAL EUROPÉEN ET AU COMITÉ
DES RÉGIONS**

**Améliorer les compétences pour le XXI^e siècle:
un programme de coopération européenne en matière scolaire**

{SEC(2008) 2177}

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COMMUNICATION DE LA COMMISSION AU PARLEMENT EUROPÉEN, AU CONSEIL, AU COMITÉ ÉCONOMIQUE ET SOCIAL EUROPÉEN ET AU COMITÉ DES RÉGIONS

Améliorer les compétences pour le XXI^e siècle: un programme de coopération européenne en matière scolaire

1 INTRODUCTION

Préparer les jeunes au XXI^e siècle

1.1 Les mutations économiques et sociales que connaît l'Union européenne sont source de nouvelles possibilités et de nouveaux défis. Pour s'épanouir dans une économie mondialisée et des sociétés caractérisées par une diversité croissante, les jeunes doivent posséder un éventail de compétences plus large que jamais. Bon nombre d'entre eux occuperont des emplois qui n'existent pas encore. Beaucoup devront faire montre de grandes capacités linguistiques, interculturelles et entrepreneuriales. La technologie va continuer de transformer le monde au-delà de tout ce que nous pouvons imaginer. Des défis comme le changement climatique nécessiteront une adaptation radicale. Dans ce monde de plus en plus complexe, la créativité et la capacité de continuer d'apprendre et d'innover compteront autant, si pas plus, que les connaissances thématiques spécifiques susceptibles de devenir obsolètes. L'éducation et la formation tout au long de la vie doit être la norme.

1.2 Le Conseil européen a souligné à plusieurs reprises le rôle essentiel de l'éducation et de la formation pour la croissance, la compétitivité à long terme et la cohésion sociale futures de l'Union. Pour obtenir de bons résultats dans ces domaines, il est capital de développer pleinement le potentiel d'innovation et de créativité des citoyens européens. Il convient de renforcer le volet «éducation» du triangle de la connaissance («recherche-innovation-éducation»), en commençant tôt – dans les écoles. Les compétences et les habitudes d'apprentissage acquises à l'école sont essentielles pour se doter de nouvelles compétences en vue d'occuper de nouveaux emplois plus tard dans la vie.

1.3 La Commission a indiqué¹ que, pour promouvoir le bien-être face aux défis du XXI^e siècle, il fallait appliquer une nouvelle méthode consistant à fournir aux citoyens des *opportunités* adéquates d'accomplissement de soi et un *accès* à l'éducation, à l'emploi, aux soins de santé et à la protection sociale, dans un contexte de *solidarité*, de cohésion sociale et de viabilité. Dans ce cadre, la Commission a estimé qu'il était prioritaire, entre autres, d'investir dans la jeunesse.

1.4 Le Conseil a conclu² que la croissance et la prospérité de l'Europe passaient par une participation active de l'ensemble des jeunes. Les résultats d'un enfant au cours de sa scolarité obligatoire ont une influence directe marquée sur sa participation sociale, ses études ou sa formation et son salaire futurs. Cependant, l'accès à un enseignement scolaire de qualité est inégal, de sorte que les systèmes éducatifs accentuent souvent les disparités socio-économiques.

¹ COM(2007) 726 final.

² JO C 282 du 24.11.2007, p. 16.

1.5 Les ministres de l'éducation se sont engagés à améliorer la qualité et l'équité des systèmes éducatifs³. Le Conseil a adopté trois critères de référence directement liés à l'enseignement scolaire (concernant les jeunes quittant l'école prématurément, la maîtrise de la lecture et l'achèvement de l'enseignement secondaire supérieur) à atteindre pour 2010, mais les progrès sont insuffisants. Par conséquent, le Conseil européen a invité les États membres à faire baisser sensiblement l'illettrisme chez les jeunes et le nombre de jeunes en décrochage scolaire, et à améliorer les niveaux de qualification atteints par les apprenants issus de l'immigration ou de groupes défavorisés⁴.

1.6 Dans le cadre de son examen annuel des programmes nationaux de réforme de Lisbonne, la Commission a recommandé à plusieurs États membres d'améliorer des aspects spécifiques de leurs systèmes d'enseignement scolaire.

Objet de la présente communication

1.7 Compte tenu des considérations qui précèdent, le défi que l'Union européenne doit relever consiste à renforcer la réforme des systèmes scolaires par un accès et des possibilités améliorés de manière à ce que *chaque* jeune puisse développer pleinement son potentiel pour, plus tard, participer activement à la nouvelle économie de la connaissance, ainsi qu'à accroître la solidarité sociale.

1.8 Les États membres sont responsables de l'organisation et du contenu de l'éducation et de la formation. Les différents systèmes scolaires existant en Europe, qui reposent sur des valeurs communes, renferment une multitude de pratiques innovantes et excellentes. Il convient de mieux exploiter cette diversité.

1.9 La plupart des États membres disposent désormais de stratégies d'éducation et de formation tout au long de la vie au sein desquelles l'enseignement scolaire occupe une place essentielle⁵. Ils coopèrent plus intensément sur les questions de politique scolaire. Le rôle de l'Union consiste à les aider en facilitant l'échange d'informations et de bonnes pratiques. Cette coopération s'appuie également sur l'expérience acquise ces vingt dernières années dans le cadre du programme pour l'éducation et la formation tout au long de la vie et des programmes précédents. Dans le contexte de ce travail conjoint continu, la Commission a réalisé en 2007 une consultation publique sur le thème «Quelle école pour le 21^e siècle?»⁶.

1.10 Les États membres reconnaissent de plus en plus les bénéfices de la coopération face à des défis communs, comme le prouvent les recommandations relatives à l'évaluation de la qualité de l'enseignement scolaire⁷ et aux compétences clés⁸ et les conclusions du Conseil sur l'efficacité et l'équité⁹ et sur l'amélioration de la qualité des études et de la formation des enseignants¹⁰.

³ JO C 298 du 8.12.2006, p. 3.

⁴ Conclusions du Conseil européen de mars 2008, point 15.

⁵ COM(2007) 703 final, point 2.1.

⁶ SEC(2007) 1009. Les réponses ont été analysées dans un rapport distinct disponible à l'adresse http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/consult/index_fr.html et sont résumées dans le document de travail des services de la Commission.

⁷ 2001/166/CE; JO L 60 du 1.3.2001.

⁸ 2006/962/CE; JO L 394 du 30.12.2006, p. 10.

⁹ JO C 298 du 8.12.2006, p. 3.

¹⁰ JO C 300 du 12.12.2007, p. 6.

1.11 Compte tenu du caractère commun de bon nombre des défis auxquels les systèmes scolaires sont confrontés et de l'importance de ces questions pour l'avenir socio-économique de l'Union, la Commission estime que l'enseignement scolaire doit constituer une priorité essentielle du prochain cycle du processus de Lisbonne.

1.12 En conséquence, la présente communication se fonde sur les réponses à la consultation publique lancée par la Commission en 2007, les travaux récents des groupes d'apprentissage en équipe composés d'experts des États membres¹¹ et les dernières statistiques et études internationales pour proposer un programme visant à renforcer la coopération européenne en matière scolaire¹² en recensant les grands défis auxquels les systèmes sont confrontés et qu'une telle coopération permettrait de relever plus facilement. Ces défis se répartissent en trois catégories:

- la priorité aux compétences;
- un apprentissage de qualité élevée pour chaque élève;
- les enseignants et le personnel des établissements scolaires.

2. LA PRIORITE AUX COMPETENCES

La mise en place des compétences clés

2.1 Le Conseil a souligné la nécessité de doter les citoyens de «compétences nouvelles pour des emplois nouveaux» et de relever les niveaux de compétence généraux, en offrant «une éducation et une formation initiales et continues visant à acquérir des qualifications et des compétences, qui soient de la plus haute qualité, voire atteignent l'excellence, afin de maintenir et de renforcer les capacités d'innovation [...], qui sont nécessaires pour accroître la compétitivité, la croissance et l'emploi»¹³.

2.2 La tendance, dans les programmes scolaires, est d'aider les apprenants à acquérir des connaissances, ainsi que les aptitudes et les attitudes nécessaires pour les appliquer dans la pratique. Le cadre européen de compétences clés¹⁴ décrit les connaissances, les aptitudes et les attitudes requises pour une vie réussie dans la société de la connaissance. Il constitue la base d'une approche cohérente du développement des compétences, au niveau des écoles et de la formation professionnelle.

2.3 Pour acquérir des compétences, les apprenants doivent, dès leur plus jeune âge, «apprendre à apprendre» en réfléchissant de manière critique à leurs objectifs d'apprentissage, en gérant leur apprentissage avec de l'autodiscipline, en travaillant à la fois de façon autonome

¹¹ Sur les compétences clés et la réforme des programmes, les enseignants et les formateurs, l'accès et l'inclusion sociale, et les mathématiques, les sciences et la technologie.

¹² Dans le présent document, les termes «école» et «scolaire» se rapportent aux établissements d'enseignement préprimaire, primaire, secondaire inférieur et secondaire supérieur, ainsi qu'aux établissements de formation professionnelle et aux établissements préscolaires. Les questions abordées ici s'appliquent aussi en grande partie à l'enseignement professionnel initial, et devraient être incluses dans les futurs travaux du processus de Copenhague.

¹³ JO C 290 du 4.12.2007, p. 1.

¹⁴ Recommandation 2006/962/CE.

et en équipe, en cherchant des informations et de l'aide lorsque c'est nécessaire, et en utilisant toutes les possibilités offertes par les nouvelles technologies.

2.4 Les répondants à la consultation sur l'école ont réclamé un environnement d'apprentissage plus flexible aidant les élèves à acquérir une série de compétences tout en conservant des aptitudes de base. Parmi les méthodes proposées figuraient l'application de nouvelles pédagogies, la mise en œuvre de stratégies transversales destinées à compléter l'enseignement séparé de chaque matière, et une participation accrue des élèves à la mise au point de leur propre apprentissage.

2.5 Pour réformer les programmes afin d'améliorer les compétences, il faut suivre une approche globale, organiser l'apprentissage dans chaque matière et entre les matières, enseigner les compétences de manière explicite, appliquer de nouvelles méthodes de formation des enseignants et de nouvelles méthodes didactiques et, élément essentiel, associer pleinement les enseignants, les apprenants et les autres acteurs. De même, les écoles doivent favoriser la santé et le bien-être de leurs élèves et de leur personnel, ainsi que la citoyenneté active (y compris dans le contexte européen). L'acquisition d'un éventail de compétences, dont la formation à l'entrepreneuriat¹⁵ et les langues, peut être renforcée dans un environnement scolaire où le personnel et les étudiants sont encouragés à innover et à être créatifs.

La maîtrise de la lecture et de l'écriture ainsi que du calcul

2.6 La maîtrise de la lecture et de l'écriture et la maîtrise du calcul sont des composantes essentielles des compétences clés. Elles sont fondamentales pour l'apprentissage ultérieur, mais la situation en la matière se dégrade dans l'Union européenne. Le critère de référence communautaire consiste à réduire à 17 % la proportion de jeunes de quinze ans dont les compétences en lecture laissent à désirer d'ici à 2010. Or le taux en question est passé de 21,3 % en 2000 à 24,1 % en 2006. En outre, les garçons sont presque deux fois plus nombreux que les filles à avoir des difficultés à lire: 30,4 % des garçons de quinze ans sont dans ce cas, contre 17,6 % des filles du même âge. La tendance à la baisse observée pour ce qui est de l'aptitude à lire doit être inversée d'urgence. C'est l'un des grands défis auxquels les écoles européennes sont confrontées actuellement.

2.7 L'aptitude à lire dépend de divers facteurs: la culture familiale en matière de lecture, la langue parlée au domicile, les pédagogies choisies par les parents et par l'école, et les effets d'une culture multimédia basée sur l'image. Parmi les bonnes pratiques figurent les politiques d'alphabétisation familiale, l'aide spécialisée dès le niveau préprimaire, les stratégies et les objectifs nationaux en matière d'alphabétisation, et l'amélioration des infrastructures dans ce domaine (bibliothèques, matériel utilisé en classe).

2.8 La maîtrise du calcul, les compétences mathématiques et numériques ainsi que la compréhension des sciences sont aussi essentielles en vue d'une pleine participation à la société de la connaissance et pour la compétitivité des économies modernes. Les premières expériences des enfants sont capitales, mais les élèves redoutent trop souvent les mathématiques et certains modifient leurs choix d'apprentissage pour les éviter. Des méthodes

¹⁵ Voir la communication de la Commission intitulée *Stimuler l'esprit d'entreprise par l'enseignement et l'apprentissage*, COM(2006) 33 final.

d'enseignement différentes peuvent améliorer les attitudes, rehausser les niveaux atteints et ouvrir de nouvelles possibilités d'apprentissage¹⁶.

Les méthodes d'apprentissage personnalisées

2.9 Chaque apprenant a des besoins différents. Chaque classe est un lieu de diversité: des élèves des deux sexes, issus de différents groupes socio-économiques, valides et invalides, de différentes langues maternelles et aux styles d'apprentissage différents s'y rencontrent. Pour améliorer les compétences, il faut donner un enseignement plus personnalisé aux apprenants.

2.10 Un enseignement mieux adapté aux besoins de chaque enfant peut renforcer l'intérêt des élèves, accroître leur engagement dans les activités d'apprentissage et améliorer leurs résultats, mais ses bénéfices doivent profiter de manière équitable à l'ensemble des membres de la classe.

2.11 Les meilleurs moyens de réduire le nombre d'élèves quittant l'école prématurément consistent à détecter rapidement les difficultés individuelles et à appliquer des stratégies globales de prévention au sein des écoles. Les enseignants doivent être spécialement formés pour travailler efficacement dans des classes caractérisées par la diversité. Des parcours d'éducation et de formation plus flexibles peuvent faciliter l'achèvement de la scolarité et garantir la préparation de l'ensemble des élèves à l'éducation et la formation tout au long de la vie.

L'évaluation des résultats de l'apprentissage

2.12 Des études indiquent qu'une évaluation expressément conçue pour favoriser l'apprentissage constitue l'un des outils les plus puissants pour relever le niveau des élèves, en particulier de ceux qui ont de mauvais résultats, et faire d'eux des apprenants tout au long de leur vie. Or l'évaluation a trop souvent pour seul objectif de noter les élèves et non de les aider à s'améliorer; les contrôles n'évaluent pas toujours les compétences que les élèves sont capables d'utiliser, mais seulement les informations qu'ils ont retenues.

2.13 L'amélioration des compétences passe par un recours accru à l'évaluation formative¹⁷, pour détecter et résoudre les problèmes rapidement, et par l'élaboration de techniques plus sophistiquées d'évaluation sommative¹⁸ fondées sur les normes adoptées en ce qui concerne les résultats de l'apprentissage. Les enseignants jouissent d'une autonomie considérable pour ce qui est de l'évaluation des élèves; ces questions doivent être abordées dans le cadre de leur formation.

Pour aider les États membres à appliquer la recommandation sur les compétences clés pour l'éducation et la formation tout au long de la vie, la Commission propose de cibler la coopération future sur:

¹⁶ Le soutien à l'enseignement des sciences et des mathématiques est l'un des objectifs du septième programme-cadre de recherche de l'UE; l'accent est placé sur l'application de techniques d'enseignement fondées sur des questions et des problèmes dans les écoles et sur la promotion de l'échange de bonnes pratiques.

¹⁷ Évaluation assortie d'un retour d'information, utilisée pour adapter l'enseignement aux besoins de l'apprenant et aider ce dernier à réfléchir sur ses progrès.

¹⁸ Récapitulatif de l'apprentissage à un moment donné.

- **l'élaboration de plans d'action visant à relever les niveaux de maîtrise de la lecture et du calcul, comprenant notamment la fixation d'objectifs;**
- **le renforcement des compétences transversales et des compétences propres aux différentes matières, en particulier celle d'apprendre à apprendre;**
- **l'adoption d'une approche globale en matière de développement des compétences, couvrant les programmes, le matériel d'apprentissage, la formation des enseignants, l'apprentissage personnalisé et les techniques d'évaluation.**

3 UN APPRENTISSAGE DE QUALITE ELEVEE POUR CHAQUE ELEVE

3.1 Doter tous les jeunes de l'ensemble des compétences nécessaires pour la vie représente un défi sur le plan de l'équité. Aucun système scolaire n'offre des possibilités éducatives tout à fait identiques à tous les élèves. Les différences de qualité entre les écoles doivent être supprimées. Des études récentes montrent que de faibles disparités pour ce qui est des résultats des élèves peuvent aller de pair avec des résultats moyens élevés et indiquent que les responsables politiques devraient réduire les disparités et améliorer la participation en prenant des mesures ciblées sur les personnes dont les compétences sont faibles. Le critère de référence communautaire est le suivant: d'ici à 2010, au moins 85 % des jeunes devraient avoir terminé l'enseignement secondaire supérieur. En 2007, le taux moyen pour les 20 à 24 ans était de 78,1 %, soit une amélioration de 1,5 point de pourcentage seulement par rapport à 2000.

3.2 En 2006, le Conseil européen de printemps a conclu que le rythme des réformes devait s'accélérer afin de garantir l'existence de systèmes d'éducation et de formation de grande qualité, à la fois efficaces et équitables¹⁹. Il reste nécessaire de mieux comprendre, et de réduire, le lien entre le milieu socio-économique dont sont issus les apprenants et leurs résultats scolaires.

3.3 Les répondants à la consultation sur l'école ont souligné l'importance de pouvoir apprendre dès son plus jeune âge et de disposer de systèmes scolaires ouverts qui intègrent les enfants de tous milieux dans l'enseignement général tout en apportant une aide supplémentaire aux élèves défavorisés et à ceux qui ont des besoins particuliers.

L'amélioration des possibilités d'apprentissage des très jeunes enfants

3.4 L'enseignement préscolaire peut réduire les handicaps éducatifs des enfants issus de familles à faibles revenus ou de minorités. Il peut renforcer l'apprentissage de la langue d'instruction ou d'une deuxième langue. Des méthodes précoces, intensives et multisystémiques donnent des résultats impressionnants à long terme et peuvent conduire aux meilleurs taux de rendement sur l'ensemble du processus d'éducation et de formation tout au long de la vie, en particulier pour les plus défavorisés. Des données indiquent que l'enseignement préprimaire améliore les résultats moyens, l'attention et la participation en classe des enfants à l'école primaire. L'enseignement aux très jeunes enfants doit être ciblé non seulement sur les résultats scolaires, mais aussi sur les aspects sociaux et émotionnels, et doit être articulé avec les services sociaux. Le personnel concerné doit avoir une formation et des qualifications spécialisées.

¹⁹ Conclusions du Conseil européen de mars 2006.

3.5 Les États membres ont tendance à généraliser l'enseignement et les structures d'accueil préprimaires. En 2002, le Conseil s'est accordé sur le fait que les États membres devaient mettre en place des structures d'accueil pour 90 % au moins des enfants ayant entre trois ans et l'âge de la scolarité obligatoire et pour au moins 33 % des enfants âgés de moins de trois ans²⁰. Entre 2000 et 2005, le taux de scolarisation des enfants de quatre ans a progressé d'environ trois points de pourcentage pour s'établir à plus de 85 %, mais les disparités restent importantes: le taux varie de plus de 99 % dans certains pays à moins de 50 % dans d'autres²¹. L'amélioration de l'offre préscolaire et l'élargissement de l'accès à cette offre sont peut-être les contributions les plus importantes que les systèmes scolaires peuvent apporter à l'amélioration des chances de chacun et à la réalisation des objectifs de Lisbonne.

La promotion de l'équité des systèmes

3.6 Des études indiquent que les systèmes d'enseignement scolaire les plus performants forment de grandes attentes à l'égard de tous les élèves, en particulier ceux qui ne font pas l'objet de telles attentes dans leur cercle familial. Les systèmes doivent veiller à faire en sorte qu'aucun «échec» ne soit perçu comme définitif et qu'aucun élève ne quitte l'école en se croyant «incapable» d'apprendre.

3.7 Les politiques visant à garantir l'existence de parcours d'apprentissage flexibles adaptés aux besoins de chacun peuvent contribuer à favoriser l'équité des systèmes. Elles impliquent de supprimer les «voies sans issue» des parcours d'apprentissage, de renforcer les systèmes d'orientation et d'améliorer les possibilités de transfert entre les différents niveaux d'enseignement et les différentes filières (par exemple entre l'enseignement professionnel et l'enseignement supérieur).

3.8 Le Conseil a déclaré que «certaines recherches donnent [...] à penser que, dans certains cas, le fait de différencier les élèves à un trop jeune âge en les mettant dans des écoles distinctes en fonction de leurs capacités peut avoir des effets négatifs sur les résultats des élèves défavorisés»²². La grande majorité des données disponibles indiquent que placer les enfants dans différents types d'écoles alors qu'ils sont encore très jeunes peut accentuer les différences de résultats scolaires liées au milieu social. Il s'agit là d'un phénomène complexe, et les États membres peuvent coopérer pour définir une combinaison adéquate de mesures à appliquer pour y faire face.

3.9 Dans certains systèmes scolaires, jusqu'à 25 % des élèves redoublent une classe à un moment donné, alors que dans d'autres, cela arrive rarement. Cette technique coûte cher. Si certains redoublants rattrapent leur retard, la grande majorité d'entre eux ne le font pas. Les taux de redoublement sont nettement plus élevés parmi les enfants issus de groupes socio-économiques moins favorisés et les résultats à long terme des redoublants sont souvent inférieurs à ceux des élèves faibles n'ayant pas redoublé. Certains pays ont plutôt recours à l'évaluation formative combinée à de courtes interventions intensives ou à des cours particuliers donnés par du personnel de soutien. Les enseignants doivent être formés à ces techniques.

3.10 Les handicaps résultant de circonstances personnelles, sociales, culturelles ou économiques peuvent entraver l'instruction des enfants et représentent un défi crucial pour les

²⁰ Conclusions de la présidence, Conseil de Barcelone, mars 2002.

²¹ COM(2007) 703 final.

²² JO C 298 du 8.12.2006, p. 3.

systèmes scolaires européens. La pauvreté compromet le développement cognitif des individus et, en fin de compte, leurs résultats scolaires. Les enfants défavorisés ont moins de chances de réussir à l'école, d'être en bonne santé, de s'intégrer dans le marché du travail et la société et de ne pas avoir affaire à la justice pénale²³. Les problèmes spécifiques auxquels les élèves issus de l'immigration sont confrontés font l'objet d'un document distinct de la Commission²⁴.

3.11 L'école ne peut à elle seule compenser le handicap social des élèves. Pour apporter des solutions, il faut travailler en partenariat avec les familles, les services sociaux, les municipalités et les services de santé, afin d'empêcher que la pauvreté et l'exclusion se transmettent à la génération suivante.

3.12 Dans les écoles où le taux d'abandon est élevé, la rotation des enseignants a tendance à être importante, ce qui accentue les problèmes. Les ministres se sont accordés sur la nécessité d'encourager particulièrement la mise à disposition d'un personnel enseignant hautement qualifié dans les zones défavorisées²⁵. L'octroi d'aides financières aux écoles attirant des élèves défavorisés pourrait réduire les disparités en ce qui concerne la composition sociale des écoles.

Les jeunes quittant l'école prématurément

3.13 La déscolarisation précoce est synonyme de potentiel gaspillé. Elle a un coût social (rupture sociale, accroissement de la demande envers le système de santé et réduction de la cohésion sociale) et économique (baisse de la productivité, diminution des recettes fiscales et augmentation des allocations sociales versées). Les coûts pour les personnes concernées sont de faibles qualifications, le chômage, des revenus inférieurs tout au long de leur vie, une participation moindre à l'apprentissage dans le futur et une capacité réduite d'adaptation au changement.

3.14 Dans son rapport de Lisbonne 2007 sur la croissance et l'emploi, la Commission a formulé des recommandations spécifiques à l'intention de plusieurs États membres, leur demandant d'améliorer leurs résultats sur le plan de la réduction de la déscolarisation précoce. Si le taux de sortie prématurée du système scolaire varie considérablement d'un État membre à un autre, le lien avec un milieu défavorisé est toujours évident. Les enfants issus de familles souffrant de multiples handicaps sociaux sont surreprésentés parmi les élèves qui abandonnent l'école dans tous les pays²⁶, tout comme ceux provenant des zones les plus défavorisées.

3.15 Les efforts accrus consentis dans le cadre des politiques en la matière et les ressources des Fonds structurels européens consacrées à la question améliorent la situation, mais les progrès sont trop lents. Le critère de référence communautaire est le suivant: d'ici 2010, la proportion moyenne de jeunes quittant l'école prématurément ne devrait pas dépasser 10 %. En 2007, le taux moyen pour les 18 à 24 ans atteignait encore 14,8 % dans l'Union, soit 2,8 points de pourcentage de moins qu'en 2000. En 2008, les ministres ont envisagé des mesures pour lutter contre l'abandon scolaire. Parmi elles figuraient le renforcement des compétences des nouveaux arrivants dans la langue d'instruction et dans d'autres domaines afin qu'ils atteignent le niveau de leurs camarades, la détection rapide des personnes en

²³ Conseil européen, *Rapport conjoint 2007 sur la protection sociale et l'inclusion sociale*, p. 5.

²⁴ COM(2008) 423.

²⁵ JO C 298 du 8.12.2006, p. 3.

²⁶ SEC(2007) 1284, point 1.1.2.

situation de risque et la promotion de la collaboration entre leurs parents et leurs professeurs, l'offre d'activités d'apprentissage après les heures de cours, et l'amélioration de la continuité du soutien lors de la transition d'un niveau scolaire au niveau supérieur.

3.16 Si les écoles «de la deuxième chance» sont importantes, il faut également renforcer la collaboration entre les secteurs d'enseignement et de formation généraux et professionnels et prendre des mesures pour augmenter l'attrait des écoles ordinaires.

Les besoins éducatifs particuliers

3.17 Les élèves ayant des besoins éducatifs particuliers ont tendance à favoriser un enseignement où chacun a sa place, et les approches caractérisées par une telle ouverture peuvent être bénéfiques à tous les élèves²⁷. Malgré de fortes intentions politiques, plus de 2 % des élèves de l'Union européenne sont encore placés dans des établissements séparés en raison de leurs besoins éducatifs particuliers.

3.18 Pour parvenir à l'inclusion tout en aidant les personnes ayant des besoins spécifiques, il faut repenser les politiques afin d'organiser le soutien à l'apprentissage, d'améliorer la collaboration entre les écoles et les autres services et de mettre en œuvre un apprentissage personnalisé. Un soutien apporté en temps utile et de manière flexible peut aider les personnes rencontrant des difficultés temporaires d'apprentissage ou d'adaptation à rattraper leur retard, sans qu'elles doivent être transférées dans un cadre distinct.

L'évolution des écoles

3.19 Les écoles doivent pouvoir s'adapter continuellement à leur environnement changeant, ainsi qu'aux besoins changeants de leurs élèves, de leur personnel et des parents, leurs partenaires essentiels.

3.20 Dans de nombreux pays, le rôle de l'inspection scolaire est en train d'évoluer: il ne s'agit plus de contrôler, mais de soutenir et d'encourager les améliorations. La mise en réseau des établissements (par l'intermédiaire des partenariats scolaires Comenius ou du jumelage électronique, par exemple) peut accélérer l'innovation. L'autoévaluation systémique et cyclique est efficace pour aider les écoles à déterminer dans quel sens évoluer. Le Conseil a conclu que les écoles devaient se transformer en «communautés d'apprentissage»²⁸. Un nombre croissant d'entre elles ouvrent leurs installations à la communauté locale élargie et établissent des liens plus étroits avec les entreprises locales.

3.21 Des réformes très diverses ont été menées récemment en Europe pour accroître l'autonomie des écoles. Il y a lieu d'examiner plus avant les avantages qualitatifs des différents types d'autonomie, leurs liens avec les résultats des élèves, les évaluations externes, l'obligation de rendre des comptes et le choix, ainsi que la manière dont une autonomie accrue peut servir l'équité des systèmes.

²⁷ *Éducation inclusive et pratiques de classe dans l'enseignement secondaire*, Agence européenne pour le développement de l'éducation des personnes présentant des besoins particuliers, Rapport de synthèse, 2005.

²⁸ JO C 300 du 12.12.2007, p. 6.

Pour aider les États membres à appliquer les conclusions du Conseil sur l'efficacité et l'équité dans l'éducation et la formation, la Commission propose de cibler la coopération future sur:

- **la généralisation de l'accès à un enseignement préscolaire de qualité élevée;**
- **la mesure et l'amélioration des effets des systèmes d'enseignement scolaire sur l'équité, ainsi que la réduction des différences de qualité entre les écoles;**
- **l'organisation des systèmes scolaires de manière telle qu'ils facilitent une transition réussie entre les différents types d'écoles et les différents niveaux scolaires, ainsi que vers l'enseignement et la formation ultérieurs;**
- **la réduction de la déscolarisation précoce;**
- **l'augmentation de l'offre de services de soutien en temps utile et de méthodes d'apprentissage personnalisées aux élèves ayant des besoins particuliers dans les écoles ordinaires.**

4 LES ENSEIGNANTS ET LE PERSONNEL DES ETABLISSEMENTS SCOLAIRES

Les compétences et les qualifications des enseignants

4.1 La qualité des enseignants est le principal facteur intrascolaire qui influence les résultats des élèves. Elle est donc essentielle pour la réalisation des objectifs de Lisbonne. Le pourcentage de travailleurs âgés est élevé dans la profession: quelque 30 % des enseignants ont plus de 50 ans, et environ deux millions d'enseignants devront être remplacés au cours des quinze prochaines années pour maintenir l'effectif. Le personnel des écoles doit posséder les qualifications requises pour donner à chaque élève des possibilités adéquates d'acquérir les compétences nécessaires dans un environnement scolaire sûr et attrayant fondé sur le respect mutuel et la coopération, promouvant le bien-être social, physique et mental et ne laissant aucune place aux brimades et à la violence²⁹. Pourtant, la majorité des pays font état d'insuffisances en ce qui concerne les compétences des enseignants. Malgré cela, les incitations à la formation et au perfectionnement continu et les investissements dans ce domaine sont faibles. En général, le temps consacré à la formation en cours d'emploi est minime, et de nombreux États membres n'offrent aucun soutien systématique aux nouveaux enseignants.

4.2 En 2007, les ministres sont convenus de faire du métier d'enseignant un choix professionnel plus attrayant, d'améliorer la qualité des études et de la formation des enseignants et de s'employer à ce que soient proposés une formation initiale, une prise en charge en début de carrière (initiation) et un perfectionnement professionnel ultérieur qui soient coordonnés, cohérents, dotés d'un financement suffisant et soumis à une assurance qualité. Les enseignants doivent être suffisamment incités, tout au long de leur carrière, à réexaminer leurs besoins en matière de formation et à acquérir de nouvelles connaissances, qualifications et compétences, y compris dans le domaine linguistique.

²⁹ Ibid.

4.3 Les réponses à la consultation sur l'école mettent en évidence la nécessité d'améliorer l'équilibre entre la théorie et la pratique dans la formation initiale des enseignants et de présenter l'enseignement comme une activité de résolution de problèmes ou de recherche-action davantage liée à l'apprentissage et aux progrès des enfants. Le personnel des écoles doit disposer de temps pour sa formation et son perfectionnement professionnel, qui doivent être reconnus. Dans certains pays, les conditions de travail des enseignants, y compris leur rémunération, ont été citées parmi les problèmes principaux.

4.4 Des études récentes indiquent que les systèmes éducatifs les plus performants attirent les personnes les plus compétentes dans la profession d'enseignant, utilisent des procédés efficaces pour sélectionner les bons candidats et lutter contre les mauvaises prestations, appliquent des méthodes pratiques couvrant l'ensemble de la carrière pour former les enseignants et créent des environnements scolaires dans lesquels les enseignants apprennent les uns des autres.

La direction des écoles

4.5 Les écoles sont des organisations de plus en plus complexes et autonomes. Pour les diriger de manière efficace, il faut posséder des compétences diverses. La tendance est aux styles de gestion caractérisés par une plus grande collaboration et à la répartition des tâches d'encadrement, plus étroitement liés à la gouvernance scolaire. Cela nécessite davantage d'enseignants et de formateurs ayant pu développer leurs aptitudes à diriger³⁰. Les postes de direction coûtent de plus en plus cher; de nombreux États membres ont des difficultés à recruter des chefs d'établissement.

4.6 Des données récentes indiquent que les membres de la direction doivent se recentrer sur les tâches les plus efficaces pour améliorer l'apprentissage des élèves, que la répartition des tâches d'encadrement peut améliorer l'efficacité des écoles, que les personnes assurant des fonctions de direction doivent être formées et préparées de manière adéquate tout au long de leur carrière et que le recrutement et le maintien en poste des chefs d'établissement doivent être professionnalisés³¹.

Pour aider les États membres à appliquer les conclusions du Conseil sur l'amélioration de la qualité des études et de la formation des enseignants, la Commission propose de cibler la coopération future sur:

- **l'organisation de la formation initiale, de l'initiation et du perfectionnement professionnel continu des enseignants de manière telle qu'ils soient coordonnés, cohérents, dotés d'un financement suffisant et soumis à une assurance qualité, ainsi que l'amélioration de l'offre de formation en cours d'emploi, de sa qualité et de son utilisation;**
- **la révision du recrutement des enseignants en vue d'attirer les candidats les plus compétents, de sélectionner les meilleurs candidats et de placer de bons enseignants dans les écoles à problèmes;**

³⁰ Groupe «Enseignants et formateurs», principales conclusions 2005-2007.

³¹ *Improving School Leadership*, OCDE 2008.

- **l'amélioration du recrutement des chefs d'établissement et la fourniture à ces chefs d'établissement des compétences nécessaires pour se concentrer sur l'amélioration de l'apprentissage des élèves et le développement du personnel scolaire.**

5 CONCLUSION

5.1 Dans la présente communication, la Commission a relevé des domaines dans lesquels des changements, parfois radicaux, seront nécessaires si les écoles européennes veulent doter les jeunes de toutes les compétences nécessaires pour vivre au XXI^e siècle. Les systèmes existant dans l'Union renferment une série impressionnante de pratiques innovantes et excellentes, mais celles-ci restent encore trop souvent confinées à l'intérieur des frontières nationales. Les États membres doivent coopérer pour mieux les exploiter.

5.2 Dès lors, la Commission propose un programme de coopération concernant les points exposés dans les trois encadrés récapitulatifs ci-dessus, mettant particulièrement l'accent sur la manière d'améliorer les résultats pour ce qui est des questions mises en évidence par le Conseil européen, telles que l'amélioration de l'aptitude à lire et à écrire, l'élargissement de l'accès à l'offre préscolaire et le renforcement de la formation des enseignants. Les échanges devraient avoir lieu au moyen de la méthode ouverte de coordination dans le domaine de l'éducation et de la formation et être soutenus par le programme pour l'éducation et la formation tout au long de la vie, tandis que les grands défis devraient être mis en exergue dans les programmes nationaux de réforme de Lisbonne des États membres.



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**COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN
PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL
COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS**

**Improving competences for the 21st Century:
An Agenda for European Cooperation on Schools**

{COM(2008) 425}

INTRODUCTION

This staff working document complements the Communication ‘Competences for the 21st Century: An Agenda for European Cooperation on Schools’ (COM(2008)425). It presents (a) a summary of the results of the public consultation, as well as (b) the theoretical and empirical evidence underlying the Communication.

A. RESULTS OF THE PUBLIC CONSULTATION ON SCHOOLS

1. Introduction

In July 2007, the European Commission launched a public consultation entitled "Schools for the 21st Century"¹, largely based on evidence collected through its previous work under the Open Method of Coordination, as well as on the most up-to-date research in this field. The consultation was open for five months until 15th December 2007.

The public consultation was designed to involve stakeholders in present and future European debates concerning school education; however, it did not present a proposed policy on which views were sought. On the contrary, it sought to involve participants in the development of future cooperation work by seeking their views on some important aspects of school education and on future challenges and possible solutions. Opinions were sought in particular on what the added value of European cooperation could be in addressing common challenges, while respecting the principle of subsidiarity and Member State competences.

Because of the very nature of the subject – school education being very close to the daily life of citizens across the Union – a public consultation on schools could not limit itself to the formal stakeholder organisations in this field, at European or at national level. It needed also to be open to individuals – teachers, pupils, parents or simply citizens with an interest in this aspect of our societies. Decision-makers at national, regional or local level were of course also addressed by the consultation.

The final result was a significantly varied collection of responses, ranging from the insight of the individual teacher to the reform plans of national policy-makers. However, notwithstanding the fact that some major trends emerged from the public consultation, it should be underlined that these results cannot be extrapolated to European societies as a whole nor do they have the scientific validity of research conducted under strict methodological conditions. There are three reasons for this, namely that the consultation did not intend to function as an opinion poll on this subject; the significant differences in participation figures across countries²; and the fact that the degree of representation of each response varies enormously.³

¹ SEC(2007)1009.

² Although responses were received from all 27 Member States, two of them alone account for half the number of responses received, namely Italy (27% of the responses) and Slovenia (23%).

³ While some responses only represent the individual who signs them (e.g. a single student, teacher or parent), others are themselves the result of large consultations conducted at the level of national or European-level organisations.

The European Commission has published separately a report containing a detailed analysis of the public consultation contributions taken as a whole. The individual responses submitted to the consultation, which have also been published separately whenever their authors have given their consent, constitute a stimulating collection of views on our school education systems of much individual interest⁴.

2. Main results of the public consultation

482 valid responses were received, coming from all Member States of the European Union (plus Norway), though their geographical spread was very uneven. In relation to the type of respondents, schools and teachers accounted for 36.9% of all the responses, while 27.4% came from individual students. Other individuals (11.6%) and national organisations (11.4%) were also active in the consultation. Public authorities (Ministries of Education of the Member States and local and regional authorities) accounted for 7.3% of the answers, and European level associations for 5%.

The following section summarises the main trends emerging from the consultation, question by question.

2.1. Key competences for all

How can schools be organised in such a way as to provide all students with the full range of key competences?

The main basis for this question was the Recommendation of the European Parliament and the Council on key competences for lifelong learning⁵. The contents of this Recommendation are summarised on pages 12-13 below.

There was an overall consensus among all groups of respondents that school curricula and teaching methodologies need to enable students to develop their own learning competences in a more flexible learning environment. In general there was strong support for the reinforcement of transversal competences at schools. Many responses stressing the need for schools to develop independence and autonomy among pupils, as well as responsibility for their own learning. The development of creativity and intercultural skills by schools was also strongly supported.

On the practical ways to transmit the key competences, the responses put forward a variety of proposals, which mostly emphasise the importance of active teaching methodologies and of a cross-curricular approach to supplement subject-based learning, and which sets aside time and space for students and teachers in order better to address complex issues.

2.2. Lifelong learning

How can schools equip young people with the competences and motivation to make learning a lifelong activity?

⁴ http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/consult/index_en.html

⁵ Recommendation 2006/962/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006 on *key competences for lifelong learning*. OJ L L394 of 30.12.2006, p. 10.

It is widely accepted that one of the key tasks of our school systems is to prepare students for future participation in lifelong learning. While answers to the previous question focused very much on the acquisition of the necessary competences for that purpose, most of the answers to question 2 focused on fostering positive attitudes towards and motivation for learning.

There was a clear emphasis on the need to motivate young people to learn and to involve them in the learning process. Student motivation, responsibility and autonomy, together with a learner-oriented approach, were seen as the main preconditions for the development of successful lifelong learning strategies. The ways proposed to achieve these goals were again diverse depending on the group of respondents. While students showed relatively high interest and support for student autonomy and learner oriented approaches, many schools and national level organisations stressed the need for teachers to be able to work autonomously in order to develop the pedagogic strategies that work best for them.

2.3. The Economy

How can school systems contribute to supporting long-term sustainable economic growth in Europe?

Overall this was the question that showed the lowest degree of response, with most answers coming from national authorities and European level organisations. This fact, and the fact that many respondents took issue with what they perceived as an excessive economic focus of the consultation document, is in itself interesting: it suggests some discontinuity between the world of the school and the world of the economy.

The respondents, however, also emphasised the value of cooperation between business and schools, which could be enhanced through the development of exchanges. Better career guidance and the development of labour market competences by schools were also identified as areas for improvement. These competences, however, were not necessarily understood as narrow technical skills, but rather as broad competences – social competences, learning to learn, team work, etc – which should make students more employable in the future.

2.4 Equity

How can school systems best respond to the need to promote equity, to respond to cultural diversity and to reduce early school leaving?

The high level of interest in this question this could be interpreted as a result in itself – there is a broad consensus that what happens in schools is important for equity in our societies.

The strong support for measures for students with some form of disadvantage is indeed one of the main conclusions of the consultation. In general terms there was wide support for the concept of schools that accommodate students of different backgrounds, and responses by authorities and associations showed a significant interest in the development of comprehensive policy frameworks in this respect, e.g. anti-discrimination or reinforcement of the mixity of students. The provision of out-of-school placements, mentors or second-chance schools were also often mentioned as ways to tackle early school leaving.

More and better early learning opportunities, on the other hand, were perceived as one of the most effective ways to improve the equity of the overall system by many respondents from European and national associations, as well as public authorities.

2.5. Inclusion

If schools are to respond to each pupil's individual learning needs, what can be done as regards curricula, school organisation and the roles of teachers?

More flexibility in the curriculum, allowing for it to be tailored to the individual pupil's specific needs, and more support from teachers or ancillary staff – who should increasingly act as 'coaches' or 'mentors' – were some of the key topics raised under this question. There was also considerable interest in identifying gifted pupils and making special provision for them, though strategies were not precisely defined. Moving away from a purely age-based curriculum to one more closely linked to the development of intellectual abilities was supported by some educational organisations. Assessment was raised as a further element that needs to be reconsidered in the light of the need to respond to individual learning needs.

2.6. Citizenship

How can school communities help to prepare young people to be responsible citizens, in line with fundamental values such as peace and tolerance of diversity?

The presence of some form of citizenship education in the curriculum was supported by most respondents who answered on this point, but the ways put forward to implement it, either as a separate subject or as a cross-curricular theme, were diverse.

There was a strong interest in fostering commitment to democracy through the school experience itself, e.g. by ensuring that children feel respected as individuals and involved in school decisions, for instance through school councils, or by mixing pupils in heterogeneous groups and carrying out team work or exchange of experiences between them.

Tackling bullying, violence and intolerance at schools as well as finding better ways to open up schools, as institutions, to their local communities, were also perceived as relevant for better developing citizenship.

2.7. Teachers

How can school staff be trained and supported to meet the challenges they face?

A significant agreement at all levels emerged in relation to the need to rethink current models of initial teacher education in order to link theory and practice better. It is seen as essential that those who enter the profession are supported in developing a deeper understanding of the historical, social and cultural contexts within which they work. Teacher education also needs to present teaching as a problem-solving or research-in-action activity during which teaching methods and strategies, formal or informal, are examined in relation to the children's learning and their process. Classroom management strategies were raised as another issue which needs to be better addressed by initial teacher education.

Another focus was the need to improve the in-service training of teachers in terms of quality, recognition of such training, and of resources, where many teachers feel that they do not have enough free time outside teaching in order to support their professional development.

Improved recognition of teaching as a profession was also important for many respondents, including, for some countries, the issue of increasing teachers' pay.

2.8. School communities

How can school communities best receive the leadership and motivation they need to succeed? How can they be empowered to develop in response to changing needs and demands?

The creation of inclusive learning communities in which everyone – staff, students, parents – is involved and valued for their input is seen as key to the success of schools as organisations. In general, it is felt that school autonomy and the development of less hierarchical structures can reinforce this involvement.

While many authorities and associations favour increasing the monitoring and evaluation of schools, many teacher respondents from various countries refer to the perceived unhelpfulness of current inspectoral systems. Current trends towards a more advisory role for school inspectors are welcomed.

B. THEORETICAL AND EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE

The numbers in brackets (e.g. 1.1) refer to the corresponding paragraph in the Communication COM(2008)425.

Preparing young people for the 21st century

(1.1)

The changing nature of the skills and levels of qualification required by the economy puts great pressure on schools. A 2008 Cedefop study summarising future skills needs in Europe judges that the present trends will persist, namely 'continuing shifts away from primary industries (especially agriculture) and from traditional manufacturing industries towards services and knowledge-intensive jobs'⁶. Nevertheless, a further 13 million jobs are projected by 2015, largely in the business and miscellaneous sectors, but also in distribution and transport, and non-marketed services such as health and education⁷. This means that workforces need to adapt, with schools providing the foundation for the acquisition of new skills throughout life, particularly by adults and people at risk of unemployment.

Technological and other changes tend to polarise the demand for skills, leading to many jobs at higher levels and at the lower end of the job spectrum. There is a projected increase in jobs demanding more formal qualifications.

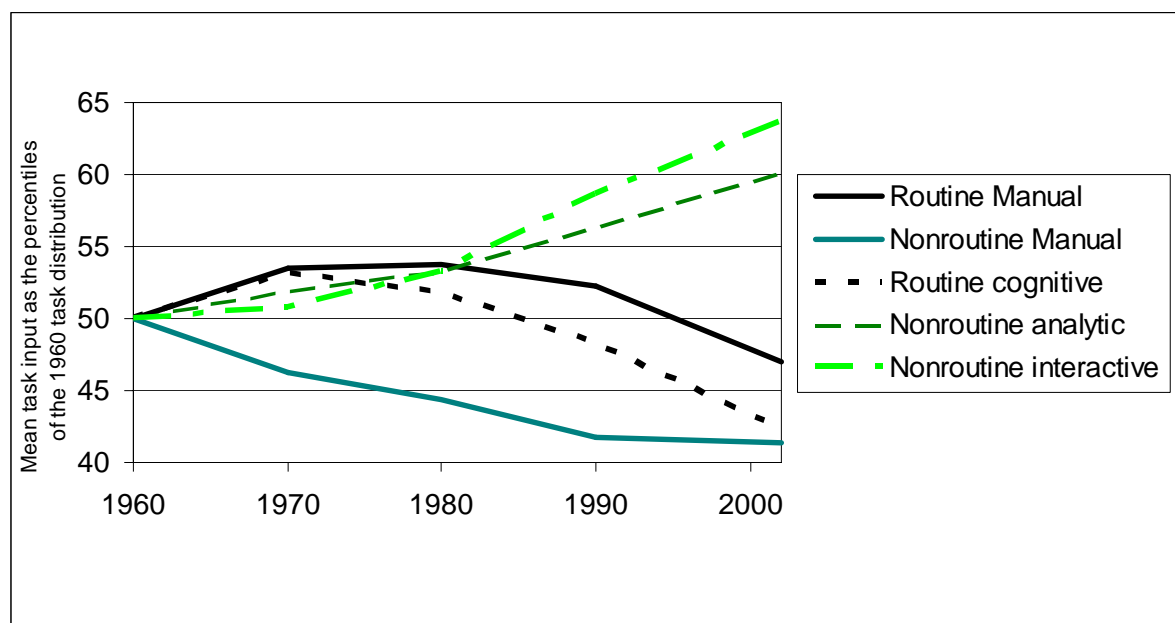
Chart 1.1 shows a prognosis of future skills needs. It shows demand shifting toward a higher skilled and more flexible labour force⁸.

⁶ *Future skills needs in Europe, A medium term forecast* (Synthesis report), CEDEFOP (2008), p. 86.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ The definition of the categories in the chart are the following: non-routine analytic (solving problems for which there are no rule-based solutions); non-routine interactive (interacting with humans to acquire information, to explain it, or to persuade others of its implications for action); routine cognitive (mental tasks that are well described by deductive or inductive rules); routine manual (physical tasks that can be well described using deductive or inductive rules); non-routine manual (physical tasks that cannot be described by such rules). See F. Levy, R. J. Murnane, *The new division of labour* (2004).

Chart 1.1: How the demand for skills has changed: economy-wide measures of routine and non-routine task input (US)



A. Schleicher, 'Europe's Skill Challenge' OECD Directorate for Education. Presentation held during the Lisbon Council, (15 October 2007).

Available online: http://www.lisboncouncil.net/media/schleicher_skills_presentation151007.pdf

Adapted from F. Levy, and R. J. Murnane, *The new division of labour* (Princeton University Press, 2004).

(1.2 - 1.4)

Many studies point to a significant impact of schooling on skills development, revealing correlations between the quality of schools and the quality of the labour force. Hanushek and Kimko conclude that labour-force quality differences are related to schooling (but not necessarily to the resources devoted by a country to schooling); and that the quality of the labour force has a causal impact on growth⁹.

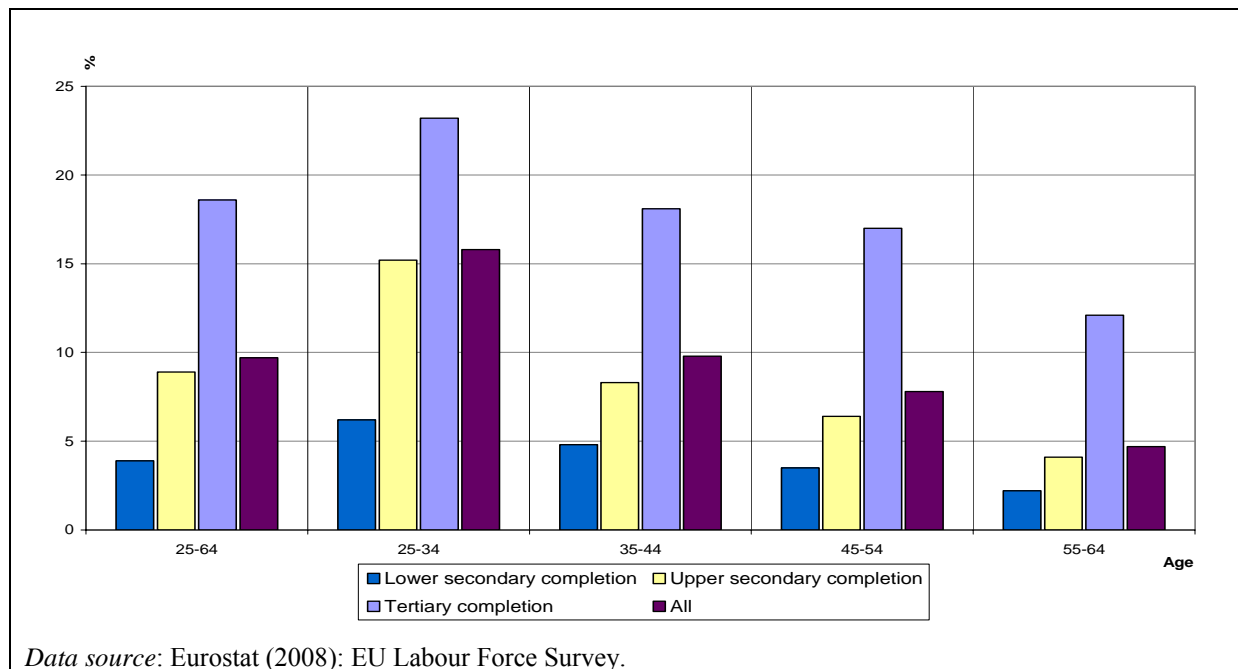
The years spent in school have a great impact in shaping people's participation in, and attitudes to, further learning. Participation in post-compulsory education and training tends to be proportional to the level of prior education. 'Typically people with higher levels of education are more easily reached by and more receptive to measures to encourage participation in education and training'¹⁰. Chart 1.2 below shows the participation of adults in education and training according to their educational attainment. It shows that in 2007 the highest rate of participation was for people aged between 25 and 34, regardless of their level of education; after age 34, participation rates decreased; and the participation of those between ages 55 and 64 was less than one third that of those between 25 and 34. Older persons with tertiary education also took part in lifelong learning half as frequently as

⁹ E. A. Hanushek, D. D. Kimko, 'Schooling, labour force quality, and the growth of nations', *American Economic Review* 90 (2000).

¹⁰ SEC(2007)1284, *Progress towards the Lisbon objectives in education and training, Indicators and Benchmarks*, p.81.

younger people with the same level of education. The chart also shows that individuals with higher levels of attainment – in any age group – participate more in lifelong learning than others with lower levels of educational attainment.

Chart 1.2: Participation in lifelong learning by age and educational attainment (EU-27), 2007



Recent research points to strong correlations between education and well-being, though empirical data remain scarce¹¹. Well-being in this context means not only educational well-being but also economic well-being and the enjoyment of civil liberties, relative freedom from crime, enjoyment of clean environment and individual states of mental and physical health. An OECD study on well-being concluded that human and social capital are closely related to the way in which institutions and political and social arrangements impact on society. It also pointed out that to sustain well-being, adequate investment in human and social capital is needed. Thus, for instance, investment in the development of knowledge and skills helps to secure economic as well as social and personal well-being¹².

The ‘capability’ approach developed by Amartya Sen helps illuminate the concept of well-being and its relation to education. Education is viewed as an unqualified good for human capability expansion and human freedom. The relevance of the capability approach for education, well-being and equity is that it examines issues such as the fair distribution of valued capabilities in and through education, or the availability of opportunities for pupils to convert their resources into capabilities¹³.

A current OECD project shows that learning experiences can foster civic and social engagement: by shaping what people know, by developing competences that help people

¹¹ See *European Journal of Education* 43 (March 2008) for current research on the relationship between education and well-being.

¹² *The well-being of nations*, OECD (2001), pp. 10-13.

¹³ A. Sen, *Development as freedom* (1999); M. Walker, E. Unterhalter (eds.), *Amartya Sen's capability approach and social justice in education* (2007), p. 5.

apply, contribute and develop their knowledge, by cultivating values, attitudes, beliefs and motivations that encourage civic and social engagement, and by increasing social status. More schooling is not enough. The quality of the learning experience and approaches to learning both inside and outside school are key. Curriculum, school ethos, and pedagogy are crucial variables; learning environments that stress responsibility, open dialogue, respect and the application of theory and ideas in practical group-oriented work seem to work better than civic education on its own¹⁴.

A review of the evidence concluded that more years of schooling are substantially associated with higher levels of well-being and better health behaviours¹⁵.

A recent study from the UNICEF Innocenti Centre identified several factors that have an impact on children's well-being: material well-being, health and safety, educational well-being, peer and family relationships¹⁶.

The links between school attainment and employment are well documented. The estimated long term effect on economic output of one additional year of education in the OECD area is generally between 3% and 6%¹⁷. Among OECD countries, completion of upper secondary level of education is typically considered to be the minimum level of education needed to obtain a satisfactory, competitive position in the labour market. As Chart 1.3 shows, on average, the rate of employment among individuals with upper secondary education is 18 percentage points higher than among individuals who have not completed upper secondary education.

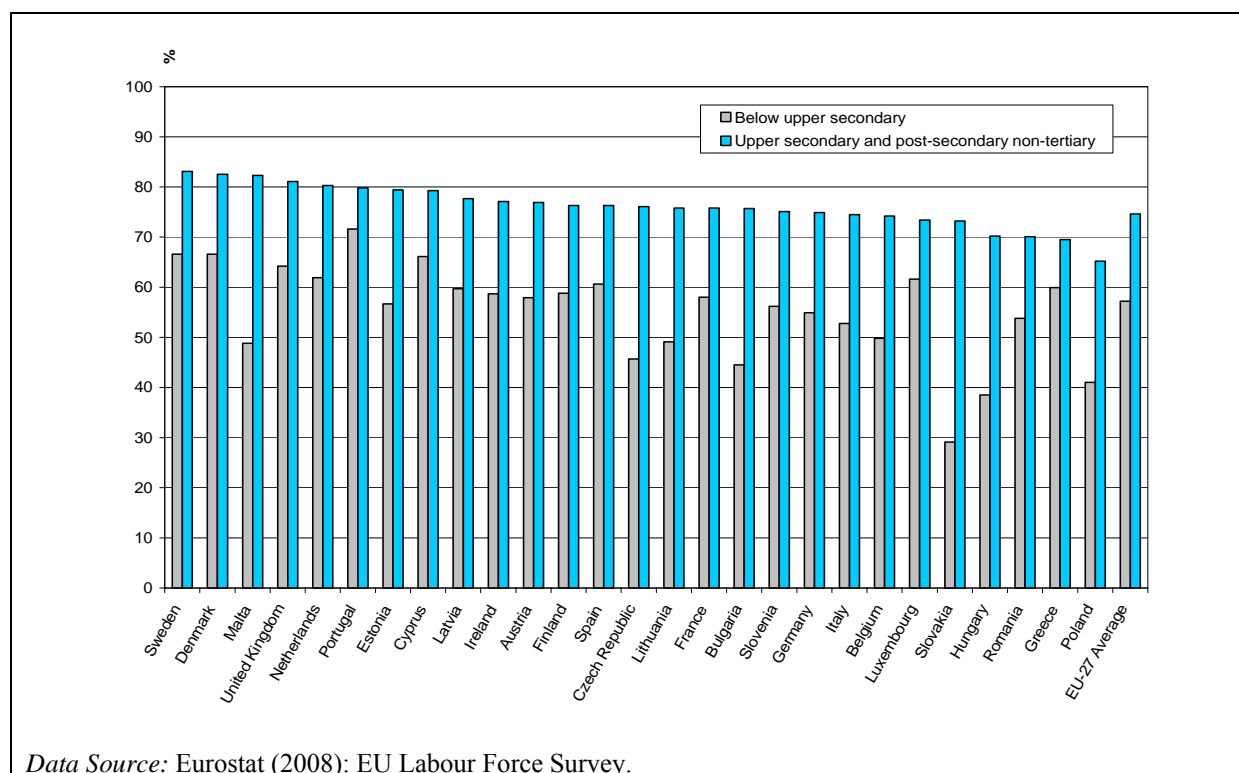
¹⁴ L. Feinstein, R. Sabates, T. M. Anderson, A. Sorhaindo, C. Hammond, 'What are the effects of education on health?', in R. Desjardins and T. Schuller (eds.), *Measuring the effects of education on health and civic/ social engagement*, OECD (2006).

¹⁵ *Understanding the social outcomes of learning*, OECD (2007), p.105.

¹⁶ *An overview of child well-being in rich countries*, UNICEF, Innocenti Centre (2007).

¹⁷ *Education at a glance*, OECD, (2006), p. 154.

Chart 1.3: Employment rates, by educational attainment (2007)
Percentage of the 25-to-64-year-old population that is employed



The principal impact of education on growth is estimated to be to raise the productivity of the whole workforce, rather than to increase the number of individuals able to bring about radical innovations. Low skills seem to inhibit rates of technical innovation and rates of adoption of more productive work organisation. Average skills levels explain over 55% of growth differences in GDP per capita between 1960 and 1995 in OECD countries¹⁸.

Research has sought to estimate the relationship between human capital and economic growth using internationally comparable literacy scores (1994 International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) data) from 14 OECD countries. The outcomes of this research indicate that a country able to attain literacy scores 1% higher than the international average will achieve levels of labour productivity and GDP per capita that are 2.5 and 1.5% higher, respectively¹⁹.

(1.5)

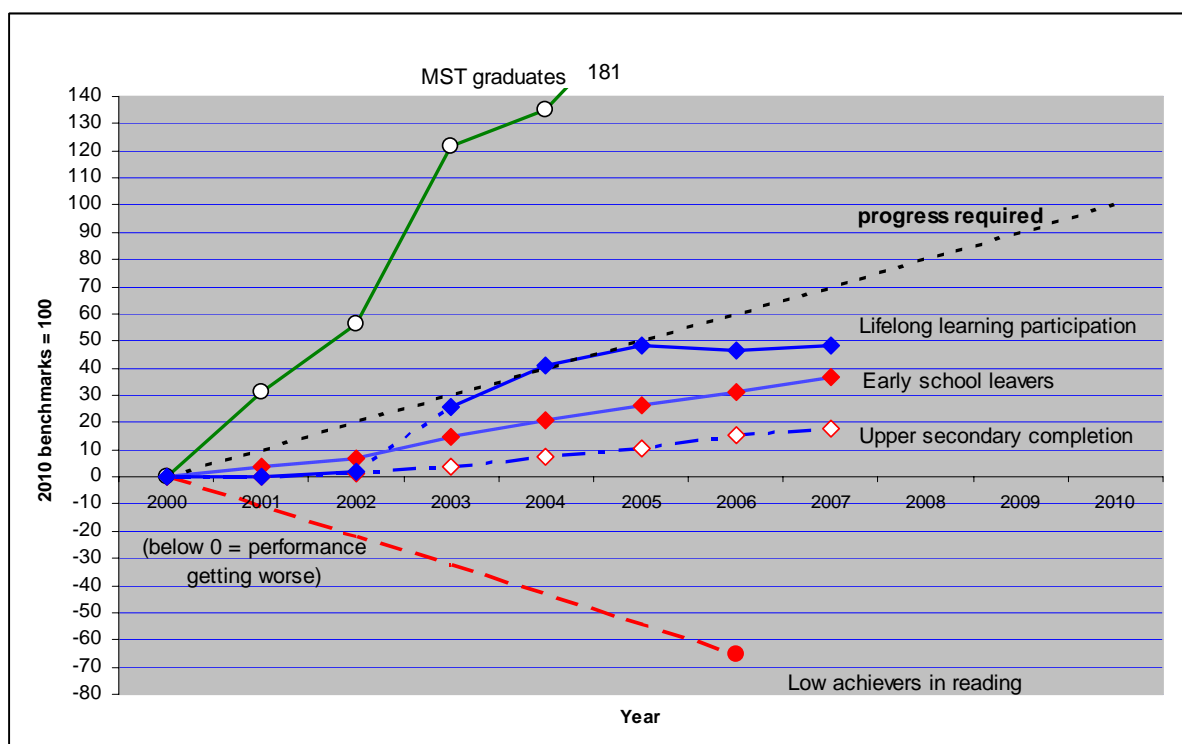
The data for the three EU benchmarks most strongly related to school education do not demonstrate sufficient progress to achieve the Union's objectives by 2010. There has been constant improvement in reducing the proportion of early school leavers, but faster progress is needed in order to achieve the benchmark. There has been slow but steady progress in increasing the proportion of young people who complete upper secondary education. The

¹⁸ A. Schleicher, J. J. Rousseau lecture, Lisbon Council meeting, October 2007.

¹⁹ S. Coulombe, J.F. Tremblay, S. Marchand, 'Literacy scores, Human capital and growth across fourteen OECD Countries', Statistics Canada: Human Resources and Skills Development (2004), p. 31. and appendix F, pp. 66-74, cited in *Education at a glance*, OECD, (2006), p. 155.

share of low achievers in reading has increased in the EU, though some Member States have achieved improvements.

Chart 1.4: Progress towards meeting the 5 benchmarks (EU average)



Data source: OECD (PISA), Eurostat (UOE and EU Labour Force Survey).

Source: *Progress towards the Lisbon objectives in education and training. Indicators and benchmarks* (2007, updated 2008).

2. FOCUS ON COMPETENCES

Implementing key competences

(2.2)

A 2006 Recommendation of the European Parliament and the Council introduced a European framework of Key Competences for Lifelong Learning²⁰. The Recommendation aims to provide policy makers, teachers and learners themselves with a reference tool. It calls on Member States to ensure that all young people are given the possibility to develop the eight key competences by the end of initial education and training and that specific attention is paid to the needs of disadvantaged learners. It recommends that adults have the opportunity to learn, maintain and update their key competences throughout their lives.

The key competences are: communication in the mother tongue, communication in foreign languages, mathematical competence and basic competences in science and technology,

²⁰ Recommendation 2006/962/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006 on key competences for lifelong learning. OJ L L394 of 30.12.2006, p. 10.

digital competence, learning to learn, social and civic competences, sense of initiative and entrepreneurship and, cultural awareness and expression. They are all considered equally important, because each of them can contribute to a successful life in a knowledge society. Many of the competences overlap and interlock: aspects essential to one domain support competence in another. Competence in the fundamental basic skills of language, literacy, numeracy and in information and communication technologies (ICT) is an essential foundation for learning, and learning-to-learn supports all other learning activities. There are a number of themes that are applied throughout the Reference Framework: critical thinking, creativity, initiative, problem solving, risk assessment, decision taking, and constructive management of feelings play a role in all eight key competences.

A 2002 Eurydice survey on key competences noted that curricula were increasingly focusing on the successful application of knowledge and skills than on the simple transmission of knowledge²¹. As a result, most education authorities had redefined their educational aims in terms of competences. Developing the capacity to apply knowledge and skills increases their "transfer value", and learning consequently becomes more attractive and beneficial for the individual and society. Some education systems have recently focused their attention on competences applicable to a maximum number of real-life situations.

Recent working papers (2004, 2007) of the peer-learning Cluster 'Key Competences-Curriculum Reform' confirm this trend²². The Cluster has undertaken two mapping exercises on how national policy agendas for lifelong learning and school curricula recognise key competences. Either implicitly or explicitly key competences are included in most important documents guiding school education. Much emphasis has been put on the consistency and comprehensiveness of provision – both from a systemic and from a learner perspective.

A 2006 Eurydice survey mapped how entrepreneurship education has been integrated into secondary curricula. It found that some member states explicitly recognise entrepreneurship education, others teach it as part of general subjects, while a third group of countries is developing other initiatives in the field²³. Some Europe-wide initiatives foster entrepreneurial competences within school settings. In the framework of the 'Junior achievement' programme – running in partnership between local businesses and schools – younger students learn in interactive ways about how communities and businesses work, while older students can set up and run their own companies for a year²⁴.

The 2007 Commission Communication on financial education pointed out how financial literacy should be enhanced on a continuous basis at all stages of life by being integrated across subjects, such as mathematics, history and entrepreneurship²⁵.

A recent study on the future of the knowledge economy notes that the challenge now is to create environments for learning that incorporate both economic and civic goals. While the skills of the workforce remain important, they alone are not a sufficient source of decisive

²¹ *Key competencies: A developing concept in general compulsory education*, Eurydice Survey 5 (2002).

²² Working Group B, Progress report 2004, <http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/2010/doc/lang2004.pdf>; Cluster 'Key Competences, Curriculum reform', Synthesis report on peer learning in 2007. http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/2010/doc/peer07_en.pdf

²³ *Entrepreneurship education in Europe*, Eurydice (2006).

²⁴ See: www.ja-ye.org and similar projects e.g.: <http://www.ecole-et-entreprise.fr/index.htm>.

²⁵ COM(2007)808.

competitive advantage. This depends on how the capabilities of the workforce are combined in innovative and productive ways²⁶.

(2.3)

The European Framework of Key Competences stresses the importance of learning-to-learn as key to acquiring other competences and developing capabilities. Learning competences are not mastered in a single straightforward way but are shaped by a broad range of developmental influences to which learners are exposed in and out of school. Learning skills are increasingly not only embedded implicitly in the curriculum but are also being taught in an explicit way. Current projects focus on the development of self-reporting instruments for formative and diagnostic use by learners and their teachers²⁷, or on the development of pupils' learning practices rather than on their expressed beliefs (learning *how* to learn)²⁸. The European Commission is currently developing an indicator of the learning to learn competence.

The importance of learning capacity in terms of performance is shown in an OECD analysis of the relative performance of students who control their learning. Students' approaches to learning measured in PISA explain one fifth of the difference in students' literacy performance. But if students' tendency to control their learning is taken as an outcome of learning, since learning autonomy is a key precondition of lifelong learning, an even stronger relationship becomes visible²⁹.

(2.5)

Two European projects on the impact of new approaches to teaching and learning in schools identified several barriers to change in learning and teaching: professional capacity, curriculum restraint, and lack of appropriate teaching material³⁰.

The report of the Cluster 'Key Competences-Curriculum Reform' claims that the successful implementation of curricula based on key competences is not in contradiction with the organisation of teaching and learning according to school subjects that can allow for a development of in-depth knowledge of a certain discipline and target the acquisition of specific skills. However, the challenges are several. All teachers, irrespective of their subject

²⁶ P. Brown, H. Lauder, D. Ashton, 'Education, globalisation and the future of the knowledge economy', in: D. Epstein, R. Boden, R. Deem, F. Rizvi, S. Fight (eds.), *World year book of education 2008. Geographies of knowledge, geometries of power. Higher education in the 21st century* (2008), pp.18-20. On the transformation of the relationship between education, jobs and rewards see for example: M. Lawn, 'Borderless education: imagining a European education space in the time of brands and networks', in: A. Novoa, M. Lawn (eds.), *Fabricating Europe: the formation of an education space* (2002) and M. Room, *The European challenge: innovation, policy learning and social cohesion in the knowledge economy* (2005).

²⁷ For example R. Deakin-Crick, 'Developing an effective lifelong learning inventory : the ELLI project', *Assessment in Education* 11/3(2004), pp. 247-272 .

²⁸ For example M. James et al, *Improving learning how to learn – classrooms, schools and networks* (2007).

²⁹ *Messages from PISA 2000*, OECD (2004); see also PISA 2003 results published in *Learning for tomorrow's world*, OECD (2004), particularly chapter 3.

³⁰ S. Power, *Education. Policy Synthesis of EU Research Results*, Series N°4 (2007), p. 29. 'Teacher training, reflective theories and teleguidance: perspectives and possibilities in teacher training in Europe' and 'Computer –supported collaborative learning in primary and secondary education'.

specialisation, should be aware of, and feel responsible for, developing the key competences of their students in the whole school context. The development of competences is based on active and experiential learning, supporting learners' individual development and personalised learning.

Teaching and learning with subject-centred and cross-curricular elements need to be well coordinated; teachers can collaborate effectively if each member of a school community has a clear understanding of how to support the development of key competences. Pupil assessment should follow the same logic. School leadership should build on a common vision of school development and a shared or distributed approach that encourages teachers to work in teams rather than only alone³¹.

Some Member States have used cross-curricular themes as ways of developing key competences. A 2005 project brought together ten case studies from five European countries in order to identify the problems schools face while dealing with cross-curricular work, and the solutions they find in doing so. Table 2.1 shows cross-curricular themes and their frequency of occurrence³².

³¹ Cluster 'Key Competences, Curriculum reform', Synthesis report on peer learning in 2007. http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/2010/doc/peer07_en.pdf, p.9.

³² *Cross-curricular themes in secondary education, Report of a CIDREE collaborative project (2005)* Cross-curricular themes are interdisciplinary themes, which integrate language skills (reading, speaking, listening, viewing, and thinking) with a variety of content areas, such as science, art, music and so on. They are not identical with cross-curricular or transversal competences as identified in the Recommendation on key competences mentioned before.

Table 2.1: Summary of occurrence and respective status of cross-curricular themes in 27 European countries/communities included in the survey (Maes et al., 2001).

<i>Cross-curricular theme</i>	<i>Number of countries (N=27) where this theme is included in the curriculum</i>	<i>Statutory</i>	<i>Not statutory</i>
1. Health / physical / sport education / life skills	25	16	9
2. Environmental / ecological education	21	14	7
3. Citizenship / human rights / co-operation / political / peace education	19	14	5
4. Social / communicative skills / reading / speech	17	13	4
5. Media education / ICT	15	11	4
6. Learning to learn / ability to think critically	13	10	3
7. Artistic / cultural education	12	8	4
8. Philosophical education / ethics	9	6	3
9. Intercultural education	10	8	2
10. Problem solving	8	6	2
11. International education	7	3	4
12. Road safety / traffic education	6	4	2
13. Preparation for the world of work / entrepreneurship education	6	4	2
14. Technological education	5	3	2
15. Economic / consumer education	4	2	2
16. Career guidance	2	1	1

Source: Cross-curricular themes in secondary education; Report of a CIDREE collaborative project (2005), p. 4.

The study identified a number of problems related to the implementation of cross-curricular themes at the level of teachers, pupils and the school itself. It emphasised the importance of motivation and involvement by teachers and pupils, and the importance of assessment. Problems at the school level include subject curriculum overload, timetable inflexibility, lack of infrastructure, space and especially time, the pressure of final exams and university entrance requirements, and teacher training which prepares new teachers insufficiently for working with cross-curricular themes³³.

Literacy and numeracy

(2.6-2.7)

The European Framework of Key Competences defines reading literacy as an essential part of the ability to express and interpret thoughts, feelings and facts in both oral and written form and to interact linguistically in an appropriate way in the full range of societal and cultural contexts: education and training, work, home and leisure. Similarly, a sound knowledge of numbers, measures and mathematical structures together with ability in basic mathematical operations and presentations, and understanding of mathematical terms and concepts are key

³³ Ibid., pp.67-69.

to the ability to solve everyday problems and to the willingness to use mathematical modes of thought to look for reasons and to assess their validity³⁴.

According to the PISA 2006 survey, the average reading score in participating EU Member States fell from 491 points in 2000 to 490 points in 2003 and to 487 points in 2006 (see Table 2.2). Performance deteriorated in a large number of Member States. The only EU country where average performance improved significantly was Poland. In relation to the EU benchmark of a 20% reduction in the proportion of low achievers in reading, the percentage of low achievers increased from 19.8% in 2003 to 21.2% in 2006 (16 EU countries). If the comparison is based on two additional countries (BG, RO) for which 2000 results are available, the result is: 21.3% in 2000 and 24.1 in 2006: a significant increase in the proportion of low achievers in the EU.

Table 2.2: Differences in reading performance between PISA 2006 and PISA 2000

	PISA 2006 reading scores			Score differences to PISA 2000		
	All students	Males	Females	All students	Males	Females
Austria	490	468	513	-2	-7	-4
Belgium	501	482	522	-6	-10	-3
Bulgaria	402	374	432	-28	-34	-23
Czech Republic	483	463	509	-9	-10	-1
Denmark	494	480	509	-2	-6	-1
Estonia	501	478	524	:	:	:
Finland	547	521	572	0	1	1
France	488	470	505	-17	-21	-14
Germany	495	475	517	11	7	14
Greece	460	432	488	-14	-14	-24
Hungary	482	463	503	2	-1	7
Ireland	517	500	534	-9	-13	-8
Italy	469	448	489	-19	-22	-18
Latvia	479	454	504	21	22	19
Lithuania	470	445	496	:	:	:
Luxembourg	479	464	495	:	:	:
Netherlands	507	495	519	:	:	:
Poland	508	487	528	29	26	30
Portugal	472	455	488	2	-2	6
Romania	396	374	418	-32	-47	-17
Slovakia	466	446	488	:	:	:
Slovenia	494	467	521	:	:	:
Spain	461	443	479	-32	-38	-27
Sweden	507	488	528	-9	-11	-8
United Kingdom	495	480	510	:	:	:
EU Average	482	462	504	-6	-10	-4
Iceland	484	460	509	-22	-28	-19
Liechtenstein	510	486	531	28	18	31
Norway	484	462	508	-21	-24	-21
Turkey	447	427	471	:	:	:
Japan	498	483	513	-24	-25	-24

³⁴ For full definitions, see http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/2010/objectives_en.html#basic

Note: Differences that are statistically significant at the 95% confidence level are indicated in bold and at the 90% confidence level are indicated in bold italic.

*EU averages for PISA 2006 scores refer to EU-25, the average score difference to PISA 2000 refers to EU-18 and is the arithmetic average of country results for which data are available.

Source: PISA 2006: *Vol. 2 Data/Données*, p. 233 (Table 6.3a).

As for gender gaps in performance in reading, according to PISA 2006 almost twice as many boys as girls had low reading skills: 17.6% of 15 year old girls and 30.4 % of 15 year old boys.

The Cluster 'Key Competences-Curriculum Reform' surveyed good practice on promoting literacy from a number of Member States³⁵. Several good examples from countries that perform well in PISA surveys (e.g. Finland and Sweden) show how special support to raise motivation, extra time spent on reading and special teaching methods can improve students' literacy performance³⁶. A broad range of research on the subject of literacy examines the beneficial effects of early intervention, the significant impact of home literacy activities and the importance of developing good reading habits³⁷.

(2.8)

As far as numeracy skills are concerned, the Cluster 'Maths, Science and Technology' has concluded that 'proficiency in mathematics is today not mainly an affair about counting correctly; it is a multifarious general competence including problem solving and modelling, concept understanding, reasoning and communication, procedural efficiency, and appreciation of the role of mathematics in history, science, culture, work and society. A broad mathematical knowledge is in this aspect a part of a great cultural heritage, essential for both personal and societal self-esteem, creativity and growth³⁸'.

Table 2.3 shows that for most countries performance in mathematics remained broadly unchanged between PISA 2003 and PISA 2006. However for some countries there were notable changes. Among EU Member States there was significant deterioration in the case of Belgium, France, the Netherlands and Sweden and a major improvement in Greece.

³⁵ see Progress Report, Nov. 2004. <http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/2010/doc/basic2004.pdf>

³⁶ See for example: P. Linnakylä, 'From struggling to striving adolescent readers'; in: P. Linnakylä, I. Arffman (eds.), *Finnish reading literacy. When quality and equity meet* (2007), pp. 199-213.; S. Sulkunen, 'Authentic texts and Finnish youngsters: a focus on gender', in: *ibid.*, pp. 175-198.; P. Linnakylä 'Reading literacy in Finland: developing equal and empowered readers', A Finnish position paper for EU project ADORE/Socrates (28.2.2007), pp. 1-17.

³⁷ The *Journal of Research in Reading* on: <http://www.blackwell-synergy.com/doi/abs/10.1111/j.1467-9817.2005.00281.x?journalCode=jrir>

³⁸ B. Johansson, Report of MST cluster on peer learning activity organised by the National Centre for Mathematics Education, Gothenburg University, Sweden, (2007), p. 12.

Table 2.3: Differences in mathematics performance between PISA 2006 and PISA 2003

	PISA 2006 Mathematics score			Score differences to PISA 2003		
	All students	Males	Females	All students	Males	Females
Austria	505	517	494	0	7	-8
Belgium	520	524	517	-9	-9	-9
Bulgaria	413	412	415	:	:	:
Czech Republic	510	514	504	-7	-9	-5
Denmark	513	518	508	-1	-5	2
Estonia	515	515	514	:	:	:
Finland	548	554	543	4	6	2
France	496	499	492	-15	-16	-14
Germany	504	513	494	1	5	-5
Greece	459	462	457	14	7	21
Hungary	491	496	486	1	2	0
Ireland	501	507	496	-1	-3	0
Italy	462	470	453	-4	-5	-4
Latvia	486	489	484	3	4	2
Lithuania	486	487	485	:	:	:
Luxembourg	490	498	482	-3	-4	-3
Netherlands	531	537	524	-7	-3	-11
Poland	495	500	491	5	7	3
Portugal	466	474	459	0	1	-1
Romania	415	418	412	:	:	:
Slovakia	492	499	485	-6	-8	-4
Slovenia	504	507	502	:	:	:
Spain	480	484	476	-5	-5	-5
Sweden	502	505	500	-7	-7	-6
United Kingdom	495	504	487	:	:	:
EU Average	488	496	486	-2	-2	-2
Iceland	506	503	508	-10	-4	-15
Liechtenstein	525	525	525	-11	-25	4
Norway	490	493	487	-5	-5	-5
Turkey	424	427	421	1	-4	-6
Japan	523	533	513	-11	-6	-17
United States	474	479	470	-9	-7	-10

Note: Differences that are statistically significant at the 95% confidence level are indicated in bold and at the 90% confidence level are indicated in bold italic.

*EU averages for PISA 2006 scores refer to EU-25, the average score difference to PISA 2003 refers to EU-19 and is the arithmetic average of country results for which data are available.

Source: PISA 2006: Vol. 2 Data/Données, p. 235 (Table 6.3b).

The gender difference in mathematics was less than a third as large as for reading, and in all Member States boys outperformed girls or there were no significant differences.

PISA results also show strong correlations between students' attitudes towards mathematics and mathematics performance. In Table 2.4 below, 'attitudes' refers to students' interest in and enjoyment of mathematics, their instrumental motivation (meaning external rewards such as good jobs etc.), their self concept (their belief about their own mathematical competence) self efficacy and anxiety. The highest negative impact on performance is caused by anxiety,

while the highest positive impact is by self-concept in mathematics, followed by interest and instrumental motivation.

Table 2.4: Relationship of students' attitudes towards mathematics and mathematics performance (2003)

		Attitudes towards mathematics									
		Change in the mathematics score per unit of the index									
		Interest in and enjoyment of mathematics		Instrumental motivation in mathematics		Self-concept in mathematics		Self-efficacy in mathematics		Anxiety in mathematics	
		Effect	*	Effect	*	Effect	*	Effect	*	Effect	*
Austria	A	8,7		-3,7	<	25,7	<	45,5		-25,1	>
Germany	A	10,2		1,1	<	22,7	<	50,2		-28,1	>
Denmark	B	27,7	>	20,9	>	46,5	>	50,8	>	-44,6	<
Finland	B	30,5	>	26,9	>	45,5	>	45,9		-41,9	<
Sweden	B	27,0	>	23,0	>	47,0	>	52,8	>	-42,8	<
Belgium	C	15,0	>	11,0		23,3	<	45,2		-26,1	>
Luxembourg	C	6,7	<	0,0	<	19,1	<	40,5	<	-25,0	>
Netherlands	C	14,3		6,1		22,2	<	44,6		-22,6	>
Czech Republic	D	22,5	>	10,7		39,8	>	55,5	>	-42,1	<
Hungary	D	10,0		7,9		28,4	<	52,6	>	-33,2	
Poland	D	15,6	>	17,0	>	46,0	>	53,3	>	-46,4	<
Slovakia	D	12,1		6,3		44,5	>	55,0	>	-44,8	<
France	E	20,9	>	13,7	>	28,3	<	47,4		-25,0	>
Greece	E	23,7	>	14,9	>	42,6	>	45,5		-34,5	
Ireland	E	17,4	>	7,7		34,4		47,5		-32,9	
Italy	E	10,3		8,5		25,3	<	52,4	>	-33,2	
Portugal	E	14,2		17,3	>	36,8	>	55,3	>	-34,2	
Spain	E	20,4	>	19,4	>	31,9		42,7	<	-26,7	>
EU-18 average		15,8		10,8		31,1		49,5		-32,0	
OECD average		11,9		8,5		32,4		47,2		-35,3	
Iceland	F	24,5	>	17,7	>	39,7	>	40,2	<	-33,4	
Norway	F	34,3	>	28,5	>	46,6	>	46,8		-42,1	<
Turkey	F	16,9		12,9		34,8		48,6		-34,6	
Japan	F	27,6	>	23,9	>	21,2	<	54,9	>	-14,3	>
United States	F	7,8	<	13,6	>	35,1		46,7		-34,4	

Note: * indicates that the effect is statistically significantly greater (>) than that of the OECD average; effect is statistically significantly less (<) than that of the OECD average.

Data Source: PISA 2003.

Source: OECD (2007): *Education at a glance 2007*, p. 100 (Table A5.2a).

The report *Science education now: a renewed pedagogy for the future of Europe* prepared by an expert group for the European Commission on science education and mathematics, chaired by Michel Rocard, explored the prospects of new pedagogies for more effective science education and called for school science teaching pedagogy to shift from mainly deductive to inquiry-based methods³⁹. The Nuffield Foundation emphasises that it is crucial that science education offer value for all and not only for future scientists. 'For this reason the goal of

³⁹ *Science education now: a renewed pedagogy for the future of Europe*, European Commission (2007).

science education must be first and foremost, to offer an education that develops students' understanding both of the canon of scientific knowledge and how science functions⁴⁰.

Nevertheless not all studies in the field identify a strong correlation between positive attitudes and good performance. An analysis of the data from TIMSS 1999, which measured both student attainment and student attitude towards science, shows that the higher the average student achievement, the less positive is their attitude towards science⁴¹.

Personalised approaches to learning

(2.9 - 2.11)

An approach based upon individuals' competences implies more personalised teaching and learning. An OECD collection of studies on personalising learning pointed out that 'one size fits all' approaches to school knowledge and organisation are ill adapted both to individuals' needs and to the knowledge society at large⁴².

Personalised learning is not identical with individualised learning; it 'can be seen as an approach in educational policy and practice whereby every student matters, it equalises learning opportunities in terms of learning skills and motivation to learn'⁴³. Evidence from a Eurydice survey shows that a personalised approach does not exclude group processes; on the contrary, personalised approaches are often carried out within group processes⁴⁴.

Järvelä has identified and explored the main arguments for personalising learning and for fostering learning capacity. Personalising learning can increase collaborative efforts and networked forms of learning. It can increase students' interest and engagement in learning activities and their curiosity and creativity can be inspired by it. It can contribute to better learning results if students learn with the aim of developing better learning strategies, technological capacity for individual and social learning activities and learning communities with collaborative learning models. Personalised learning can take into account different values, and cultural features can be respected if the individual person and his/her needs are deemed important. Lastly it can potentially improve the use of technology in education⁴⁵.

Emerging evidence shows that 'systems capable of achieving universally high standards are those that can personalise the programme of learning and progression offered to the needs and motivations of each learner'⁴⁶. According to the OECD project '*No more failures. Ten steps to*

⁴⁰ *Science education in Europe: Critical reflections*. A report to the Nuffield Foundation (Jan. 2008), p.7.

⁴¹ Y. Ogura, *Graph of student attitude v student attainment*. Based on data from: M. Martin et al, TIMSS 1999 International Science Report: findings from IEA's repeat of the third international mathematics and science study of the eighth grade (2000).

⁴² *Schooling for tomorrow: personalising education*, OECD (2007).

⁴³ S. Järvelä, 'Personalised learning? New insights into fostering learning capacity', in: *Schooling for tomorrow: personalising education*, OECD (2007), pp. 31-46.

⁴⁴ Based on PIRLS 2001 data a breakdown of pupils by the organisational approach most often used to teach reading showed that teachers use whole-class teaching, ability grouping and individualised instruction in the classroom. Nevertheless whole-class teaching seems to be dominant. In *Key data on education in Europe*, Eurydice (2005), p. 287.

⁴⁵ Ibid., pp.42-43.

⁴⁶ D. Istance, 'Directions for schooling and educational innovation from recent OECD analyses', Presentation given at the Slovenian Presidency conference on 'Promoting innovation and creativity: schools' response to the challenges of future societies' (April 2008). Also about the use of whole-class

equity in education', several classroom practices can help to identify early those who fall behind and to give them extra support. Methods such as formative assessment (discussed below) and reading recovery strategies in the US, a hierarchy of formal and non-formal interventions in Finland, extra teaching in Flanders and *programmes personnalisés d'aide et de progrès* in France all help the student to catch up⁴⁷. It remains to be explored how the personalisation agenda can avoid systemic inequality and move towards less specified, controlled and standardised approaches in favour of greater creativity and diversity.

Assessing learning outcomes

(2.12)

Black and William (Assessment Reform Group, UK) synthesised evidence from over 250 studies linking assessment and learning. The conclusion was that initiatives designed to enhance the effectiveness of the way assessment is used in the classroom to promote learning can raise pupil achievement. They also found evidence that the gain was likely to be even more substantial for lower-achieving pupils⁴⁸.

According to them, less effective assessment approaches are those that encourage rote and superficial learning, over-emphasise grading rather than advising learners, use competitive teaching approaches which de-motivate some pupils, and in which feedback, testing and record-keeping serve more a managerial than a learning function.

Criteria for assessment that improves learning include: it is embedded in a view of teaching and learning of which it is an essential part; it involves sharing learning goals with pupils; it aims to help pupils to know and to recognise the standards they are aiming for; it involves pupils in self-assessment; it provides feedback which leads to pupils recognising their next steps and how to take them; it is underpinned by confidence that every student can improve; it involves both teacher and pupils reviewing and reflecting on assessment data⁴⁹.

Further studies also argue that assessment should help students' day-to day learning process. 'Assessment should be designed and implemented with the goal of achieving maximum validity both in terms of learning outcomes and learning processes. It should help to advance learning as well as determine whether learning has occurred'⁵⁰.

teaching, same-ability grouping and personalised instruction see *Key Data on education in Europe* Eurydice (2005), p. 287 (figure E.17). Based on teachers' questionnaire and PIRLS 2001 data.

⁴⁷ For more detail on these see: S. Field et al, *No more failures. Ten steps to equity in education*, OECD (2007), particularly pp. 94-99.

⁴⁸ P. Black and D. William, 'Inside the black box: raising standards through classroom assessment', *Phi Delta Kappan*, 80/ 2. (October 1998).

⁴⁹ 'Assessment for Learning: beyond the Black Box', Assessment Reform Group, (1999) p. 7. http://www.qca.org.uk/qca_4354.aspx

⁵⁰ A. Pollard, M. James, Teaching and Learning Research Programme, UK (submission to consultation 'Schools for the 21st Century' 2007); C. Ayala, 'Formative Assessment Guideposts', *Science Scope*, 28/4 (2005), pp. 46-48.

(2.13)

An OECD study on formative assessment in the secondary classroom suggested that areas for improvement include the alignment of summative and formative assessment, evaluation cultures in schools and links between classroom, school and systemic assessment evaluation⁵¹.

The Cluster 'Key Competences-Curriculum Reform' has concluded that the assessment of transversal competences remains a major challenge. A recent European project on 'New Assessment Tools for Cross-curricular Competencies in the Domain of Problem Solving' identified a lack of conceptual clarity as a major issue. Despite the high profile given to 'problem solving' as a necessary educational skill, there is little precision within policy documents about what this actually means; and, while it is possible to assess problem solving skills in school settings and on a large scale, it is impossible to identify a general, unique 'problem solving competence'⁵².

According to a recent Eurydice study on the autonomy of teachers it is clear that in many Member States teachers have a significant degree of autonomy in internal assessment procedures. The three aspects of assessment examined are: the choice of criteria for internal assessment, responsibility for deciding whether pupils repeat a year, and the part played by teachers in devising the content of examinations for certified qualifications. In the great majority of countries, schools are responsible for choosing the basis on which their pupils will be internally assessed and in many countries schools have full autonomy in this area. The situation is very different as regards the involvement of schools and teachers in devising the content of written examinations for certified qualifications. No European country administers examinations of this kind for the completion of primary education (ISCED 1). In countries which hold examinations at ISCED level 2, they are only rarely devised at school level⁵³.

A Cedefop comparative study (forthcoming, 2008) involving 32 countries observes that the specification of learning outcomes is being used in a range of countries that are modernising their school systems. The focus on what learners are expected to know, understand or be able to do at the end of a learning process stimulates reform of systems, curriculum, pedagogy and assessment⁵⁴. In compulsory schooling there are two different ways in which learning outcomes are given prominence: in the first, a core of learning outcomes is defined with reference to the school curriculum, to be achieved through the experience of learning (some outcomes are linked to specific subjects, others are learnt across the whole curriculum); in the second, holistic approach, the learning outcomes that the learner should achieve by the end of a phase or whole school education are associated with agreed aims and objectives of the education system and only then are appropriate subjects and groupings of subjects identified and brought into play. The possible shared ownership of learning outcomes gives an important role to stakeholders (including social partners, teaching and training professionals, research communities, learners and the wider community). The study gives an overview of the learning outcomes approach on general education in all the Members States⁵⁵.

⁵¹ *Formative assessment. Improving learning in secondary classrooms*, OECD (2005), pp. 84-88.

⁵² S. Power, *Education. Policy synthesis of EU research results*. Series N° 4, (2007), p. 28.

⁵³ For more details concerning specific countries see 'Levels of autonomy and responsibilities of teachers in Europe', Working document, Eurydice (forthcoming, 2008), Chapter 2.

⁵⁴ *The shift to learning outcomes. Policies and practices in Europe*, CEDEFOP (forthcoming, 2008)

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, in particular chapter 5. pp. 51-52, and chapter 6. pp. 58-64.

The learning outcomes approach and its impact on the design of content is reflected in the Recommendation establishing the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning (EQF)⁵⁶. It sets 2010 as the recommended target date for countries to relate their national qualifications systems to the EQF, and 2012 for countries to ensure that individual qualification certificates bear a reference to the appropriate EQF level. The development of National Qualifications Frameworks in the Member States, which gained speed significantly since 2005, responds directly to the EQF proposal and has contributed to the overall shift to a learning outcomes based approach in Europe.

3. HIGH QUALITY LEARNING FOR EVERY STUDENT

Better early learning opportunities

(3.4 - 3.5)

Member States committed themselves in 2002 to provide childcare to 90% of children between the age of 3 and compulsory school age⁵⁷. The Commission's proposed Employment Guidelines 2008-2010 note that securing childcare coverage of at least 90 % of children between 3 years old and the mandatory school age and at least 33 % of children under 3 years of age by 2010 is a useful benchmark. Guideline 18 invites Member States to promote a lifecycle approach to work through better reconciliation of work and private life and the provision of accessible and affordable childcare facilities and care for other dependants.

The growing awareness of the benefits of pre-school education has given more impetus to that commitment. The Council Conclusions on efficiency and equity in European education and training systems point out that pre-primary education brings the highest rates of return over the whole lifelong learning process, especially for the most disadvantaged⁵⁸. The Staff Working Document supporting the Commission's Communication on this theme demonstrates 'the positive effects of high quality pre-primary provision on children's intellectual and social behavioural development'⁵⁹.

Rates of participation in pre-school education have increased over recent years, and a significant number of Member States are already well beyond the Barcelona objective; however, the situation across the EU is very diverse, as shown in Chart 3.1:

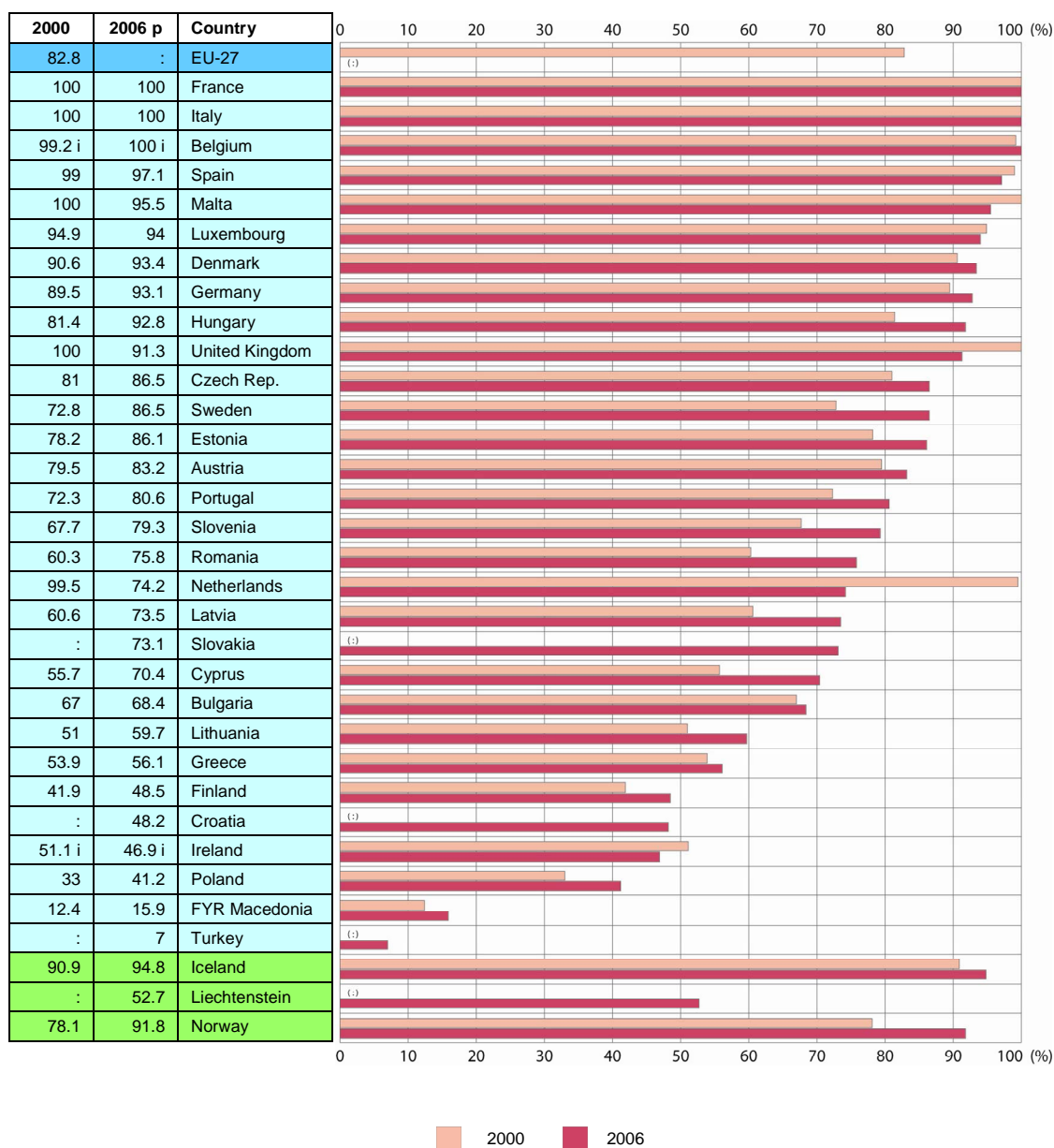
⁵⁶ Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 April 2008 on the establishment of the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning, OJ C 111 of 6.5.2008.

⁵⁷ Barcelona European Council Conclusions (Spring 2002), p. 20.

⁵⁸ OJ C 298/3 of 8.12.2006.

⁵⁹ SEC (2006) 1096, pp.16-17.

Chart 3.1 Enrolment in pre-primary education
Enrolment rates at ISCED levels 0 and 1 for 4-year olds



Data source: Eurostat (UOE data collection)

(:) Missing or not available, (i) See information notes, (p) Provisional data

(i) Some countries have participation rates of 100% or close for children aged 4 (as BE, FR, ES and IT where children typically start the school at the age of 3 (see also the Eurydice publications on national education systems);

BE: Data exclude independent private institutions. Data from the German speaking community is missing;

IE: There is no official provision of education at ISCED level 0;

Most research in the field to date has been undertaken in the United States. It has been argued that high quality early childhood education and care provide one of the few effective policy means of increasing social and economic opportunities for disadvantaged (minority)

communities and, therefore, for society as a whole⁶⁰. Eurydice will shortly publish a broad overview of the existing evidence on this subject at European level⁶¹.

High quality pre-school education and care has also been found to foster the emergence of skills in the areas of language, literacy, maths and science, as well as supporting the development of young children's learning-related socio-emotional skills, in particular self-regulation and social competence⁶². Investment in effective high quality pre-school programmes for low income and ethnic minority children, who would otherwise be insufficiently prepared for school, seems to be a specially powerful tool⁶³.

The OECD's project 'Starting Strong' also analysed the social and educational returns of early educational intervention. It refers to the Perry pre-school study (US) that shows the long term benefits, for both individuals and society, of investment in early education. Education achievement levels at age 14 also seemed to be particularly low for those who had not participated in some form of pre-school education⁶⁴.

In Europe, the UK project 'Effective Provision of Pre-School Education' (EPPE), a longitudinal (5-year) study investigating pre-school settings, and a study by the European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education (EADSNE), both highlight the importance of social/behavioural, as well as cognitive, outcomes of early childhood education and care⁶⁵. The forthcoming Eurydice study mentioned above reveals the most recent evidence on the long-term positive effects on social-emotional competence, self-regulation and intrinsic motivation.

PISA 2003 results also showed a strong correlation between pre-primary education and reading scores. Positive results were even more significant in the case of pupils with some form of disadvantage⁶⁶. PIRLS 2006 showed a very strong correlation between the time spent in pre-primary education and achievement. Reading achievement clearly increased with the amount of time spent in pre-primary educational settings⁶⁷.

Other studies emphasise the importance of quality in early-years provision. A European Childcare and Education study based on longitudinal data from Austria, Germany and Spain found that the quality of childcare (particularly within the family but also within institutions)

⁶⁰ J. J. Heckman, 'Skills formation and the economics of investing in disadvantaged children', *Science* 5278 (2006), pp. 1901-1902; J. J. Heckman, *Invest in the very young*, Centre of Excellence for Early Childhood Development (2004); J. J. Heckman, 'Investing in disadvantaged young children is an economically efficient policy', Forum for building the economic case for investments in pre school (January 2006).

⁶¹ *Tackling social and cultural inequalities through early childhood education and care*, Eurydice (forthcoming 2008). See also *Starting Strong*, I-II, OECD (2001, 2006) and *Policy Brief, Lifelong learning and human capital*, OECD (July 2007).

⁶² M. M. McClelland, A. C. Acock, F. J. Morrison, 'The impact of kindergarten learning related skills on academic trajectories at the end of elementary school', *Early Childhood Research Quarterly* 21 (2006), pp. 471-490.

⁶³ Ibid.; S. Berlinski, S. Galiani, P. Gertler, *The Effect of Pre-Primary Education on Primary School Performance* (Feb, 2006); *Investing in youth: an empowerment strategy*, BEPA (2007).

⁶⁴ *Starting Strong*, II, OECD (2006), p.105.

⁶⁵ K. Sylva et al, *The effective provision of pre-school education (EPPE) project 1997-2004: Final report*, DfES (2004); *Early childhood intervention*, Summary Report, EADSNE (2005).

⁶⁶ Cited in SEC(2007)1284, p. 27.

⁶⁷ *Progress in international reading literacy*. International report, PIRLS (2006), p.162.

was the most important predictor for almost all indicators of children's developmental status at age eight – more important than the quality of the primary school setting. This was the case for all socio-economic groups⁶⁸.

Promoting system equity

(3.6)

In its Communication on Efficiency and Equity in European education and training systems⁶⁹ and its accompanying Staff Working Paper⁷⁰, the Commission put forward evidence that, viewed in a wider perspective, equity and efficiency⁷¹ are mutually reinforcing. In its Conclusions on the subject, the Council, accordingly invited Member States to consider whether their present arrangements for funding, governing and managing their education and training systems adequately reflect the need to ensure both efficiency and equity, and to examine possible ways of improving them in order to avoid the high costs of educational inequity⁷².

Notwithstanding the importance of the efficiency perspective, the concept of educational quality clearly cannot be reduced to the relationship between inputs (resources) and outputs (educational outcomes, often measured as results in achievement tests). High quality school education does not necessarily always result in high scores in international achievement tests, for example when significant numbers of students come from disadvantaged backgrounds, for which the school has not been able to compensate completely.

Quality cannot be judged by attainment levels in some subjects alone. The European Commission developed in 2000 a framework for assessing the quality of school education in Europe based on 16 indicators in five main quality areas⁷³. This framework is based on indicators on attainment (in Mathematics, Reading, Science, ICT, Foreign Languages, Learning to Learn and Civics), on success and transition (drop-out rates, completion of upper secondary and participation in tertiary education), on the monitoring of education (the evaluation and steering of school education, parent participation), and on resources and structures (education and training of teachers, participation in pre-primary, number of students per computer and educational expenditure per student). The framework therefore covers many of the dimensions involved in raising the quality of school education.

⁶⁸ S. Power, *Education, Policy Synthesis of EU Research Results*, Series N° 4. (2007), p. 22.

⁶⁹ COM(2006) 481 final.

⁷⁰ SEC(2006) 1096.

⁷¹ Educational *efficiency*, is defined in the Staff Working Paper SEC(2006) 1096 (p. 6) as 'a measure of how resources/inputs allocated to the educational system (...) are converted into outputs for individuals (...) as well as for the economy and society'. Equity is described in the Communication (page 2, footnote 2) as 'the extent to which individuals can take advantage of education and training, in terms of opportunities, access, treatment and outcomes. Equitable systems ensure that the outcomes of education and training are independent of socio-economic background and other factors that lead to educational disadvantage and that treatment reflects individuals' specific learning needs'.

⁷² OJ C 298/3 of 8.12.2006.

⁷³ *European Report on the quality of school education: Sixteen quality indicators*, European Commission (2000).

A recent study on the common characteristics of most successful school systems highlights the central role of setting high expectations for all students – and staff⁷⁴. There is convergence among many analysts that successful education systems should deliver transparent outcomes of a high calibre, evenly distributed across society⁷⁵.

However, in some Member States, the variation in achievement between schools can be as much as 1½ or even 2 times the OECD average⁷⁶. On average across OECD countries, differences between schools account for 33% of the OECD average variance in the performance of 15-year-olds. Finland achieves not only the highest overall performance but has one of the lowest levels of variation in student performance (14% of the OECD average). Other countries in which performance is not closely related to the schools in which students are enrolled include Ireland, Denmark, Spain, Poland, Sweden, Estonia and Latvia. By contrast in Germany, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Austria, Hungary, Netherlands, Belgium, Italy and Slovenia the variance in student performance is between one and a half times and twice the OECD average⁷⁷.

⁷⁴ M. Barber, M. Moursched, *How the world's best-performing school systems come out on top*, McKinsey & Co. (Sept. 2007), p. 27.

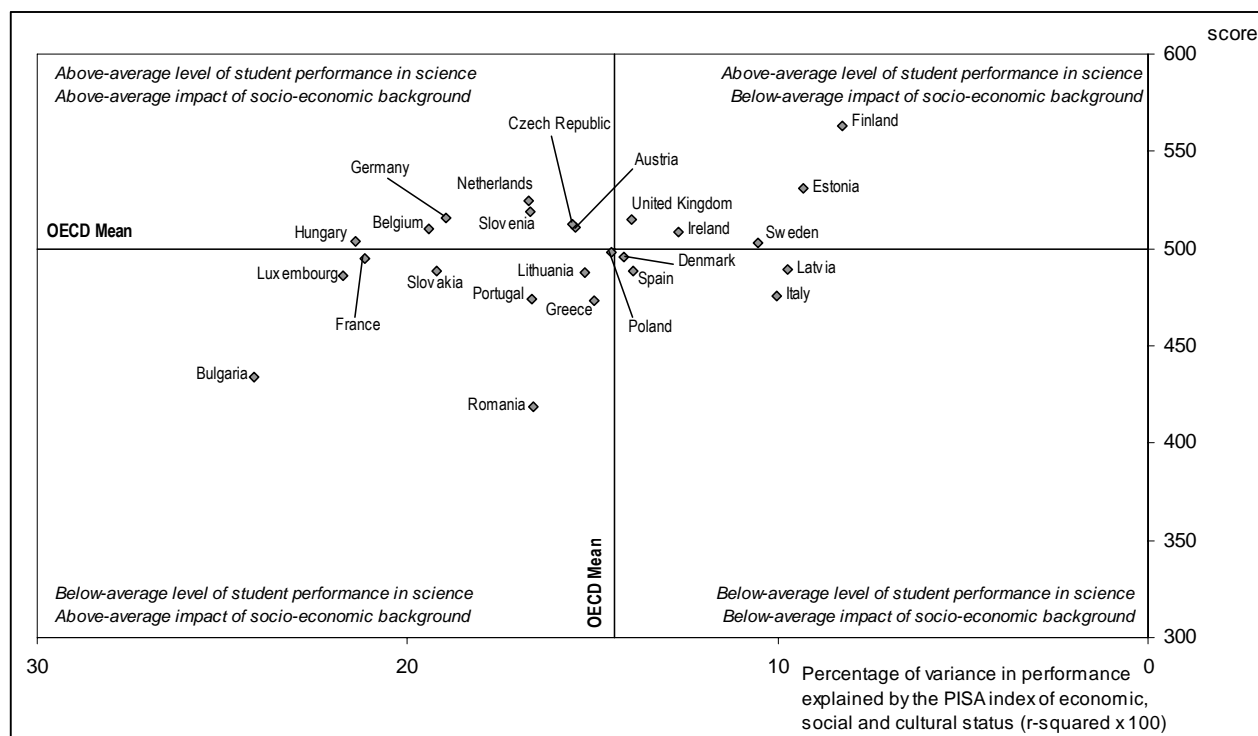
⁷⁵ See for example *Explaining student performance*, European Commission, (2005), p. 5. <http://ec.europa.eu/education/doc/reports/doc/basicskill.pdf>; H. Niemi, 'Equity and good learning outcomes', Paper presented at Finnish EU Presidency Conference (September 2006); S. Field et al, *No more failures. Ten steps to equity in education*, OECD (2007).

⁷⁶ *PISA 2006: Science Competencies for Tomorrow's World*, OECD (2007) p. 4 and p. 171. On unequal access to high-quality provision see also: Communication from the Commission to the Council the European Parliament the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: Promoting young people's full participation in education, employment and society, COM (2007) 498, point 2 in particular.

⁷⁷ *PISA 2006*, pp. 172-173.

An analysis of PISA 2006 data (Chart 3.2) shows the range of attainment levels and levels of impact of socio-economic background on student results between countries.

Chart 3.2: Performance in science and the impact of socio-economic background



Adapted from: PISA 2006, figure 4.10, p. 189. *Data Source:* OECD PISA 2006 database, Table 4.4a.

(3.7)

Guidance is an important tool for ensuring that every student can follow a learning pathway that responds to his or her needs. This is especially true at points of transition between stages of education, or between education and vocational training systems. The Council Resolution on strengthening policies, systems and practices in the field of guidance throughout life in Europe stressed the importance of guidance in schools and the role of guidance services in encouraging school completion, empowering individuals to manage their own learning and careers and in re-integrating early school leavers in appropriate education and training programmes⁷⁸.

In a lifelong learning framework emphasis upon active employability in the labour market poses new challenges to career guidance. It needs to shift from being largely available to selected groups, at particular points in life, to being much more widely available throughout the lifespan. Instead of helping people to make immediate decisions it has to embrace a broader approach that also encompasses the development of career self-management skills, such as the ability to make and implement effective career decisions⁷⁹. Research has shown

⁷⁸ Resolution of the Council and of the representatives of the Member States meeting within the Council on strengthening policies, systems and practices in the field of guidance throughout life in Europe 9286/04 (May 2004).

⁷⁹ *Career guidance and public policy: bridging the gap*, OECD (2004), chapter 1.

that early career guidance within compulsory education is beneficial. Students should learn to understand early how their choices, including decisions about their school work, may affect their lives as adults. At later stages in compulsory schooling, career education programmes need to be closely and actively linked to the world of work. There is strong case for more active involvement of parents, employers, former students and other community representatives, along with teachers, in school career guidance programmes⁸⁰. These principles are now being followed up by the Cluster 'Recognition of Learning Outcomes' and a set of detailed European guidelines for validation are currently being developed⁸¹. These principles and guidelines are linked to a 'European Inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning', providing technical information intended to support implementation of good practices in this field⁸².

Alongside guidance, the validation of non-formal and informal learning is also crucial to the promotion of flexible learning pathways and equity. The Conclusions on the Common European Principles for the identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning emphasise the right of each individual to equal access and fair treatment and the obligation of stakeholders to provide guidance, counselling and information about these validation systems and approaches to individuals. They state that the system of validation must be fair, transparent and underpinned by quality assurance mechanisms, it should respect legitimate interests, ensure the balanced participation of relevant stakeholders, and that mechanisms should be in place to avoid conflict of interest⁸³.

(3.8)

In relation to the early tracking of school students (differentiating pupils at an early age into separate schools of different types on the basis of ability), the Commission Staff Working Paper on Efficiency and Equity summarised the evidence available up to 2006⁸⁴. It concluded that when undertaken at ages 10 to 12, as is common in several European school systems, tracking may exacerbate differences in educational attainment due to social background, and thereby lead to even more inequitable outcomes in terms of student and school performance. This is partly because it tends to channel the most disadvantaged towards less prestigious forms of education and training, while the more advantaged have access to better opportunities.

This is supported by a more recent study examining the relationship between accountability, autonomy, choice, equity and student performance which shows that, in countries where no selection takes place before age 15, the difference in performance between students with low- and high socio-economic status (SES) is of 65.0 test score points. By contrast in countries

⁸⁰ Ibid., chapter 3.

⁸¹ DG EAC and CEDEFOP, 'Draft European Guidelines on validation of non-formal and informal learning'. Discussion paper presented to the conference 'Valuing learning' of the Portuguese Presidency, (November 2007).

⁸² M. S. Otero, J. Hawley, A. M. Nevala (eds.), *European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning*, ECOTEC (2007).

⁸³ Conclusions of the Council and of the representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on the Common European Principles for the identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning 9600/04 (May 2004).

⁸⁴ SEC (2006)1096, pp. 19-20.

where tracking takes place five years before the PISA testing age of 15, the difference between children of high and low SES can be up to 107.7 test score points.⁸⁵

There is, however, other recent evidence that the effects of tracking may not all be detrimental. A study of the relationship between the length of time spent in a tracked system and young adults' performance in standardized cognitive test scores found evidence of a positive performance effect of tracking⁸⁶. A second study based on cross-country analysis, produced mixed findings. On the one hand, it found that in countries in which tracking is undertaken later, the difference between the children of poorly and better educated parents in dropout rates and college enrolment or completion is smaller than in countries in which tracking takes place early. On the other hand, it found that early school tracking reduces the impact of family background on the level and on the coefficient of variation of literacy⁸⁷.

(3.9)

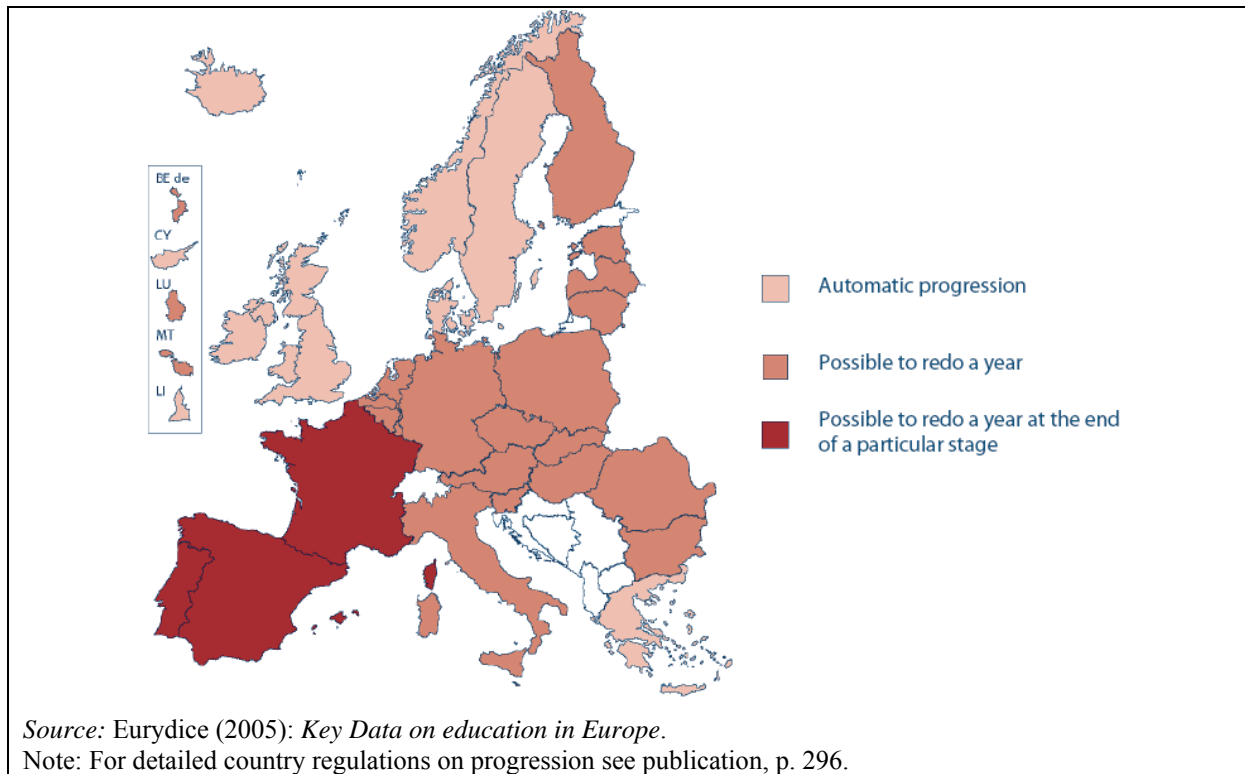
In many countries, pupils who are deemed not to have acquired an adequate mastery of the curriculum at the end of a school year may, at the discretion of the school, be required to repeat the year. In Germany and Belgium, for example, repeating a year is frequent: between 20 and 50% of pupils repeat at some time during compulsory education; in other countries pupils normally progress automatically from one year to the next throughout compulsory education (see Chart 3.3).

⁸⁵ G. Schütz, M. R. West and L. Wößmann, 'School accountability, autonomy, choice, and the equity of student achievement from PISA 2003', OECD Working papers, EDU/WKP 9 (2007), pp. 32-33.

⁸⁶ K. Ariga, G. Brunello, 'Does secondary school tracking influence performance; Evidence from IALS' Discussion paper series No. 2643, Forschungsinstitut zur Zukunft der Arbeit (2007), pp.1-16.

⁸⁷ G. Brunello, D. Checchi, 'Does school tracking affect equality of opportunity? New international evidence', *Economic Policy* (October 2007), pp. 781-861.

Chart 3.3: Main official recommendation for the progression to the next year during mainstream primary education (ISCED1) 2002/03



Research shows that the decision to make a student repeat a grade is not always based upon explicit and transparent criteria; thus, students with the same level of performance may be required to repeat in one school or with one teacher and not in another school or with another teacher⁸⁸. In its 2007 report on primary education, the French High Council for Education points out that repetition rates are significantly higher for pupils of lower SES than for pupils with higher SES, and that teachers' children are required to repeat a year significantly less frequently than others. The Council concludes that 'precocious grade repeating is ineffective and contrary to the principle of equal opportunities'⁸⁹.

Grade repetition is often considered by teachers as a compensatory measure: giving pupils a second chance or more time to 'catch up'. There is evidence to contradict this view. Hutmacher finds that while some repeaters catch up, the vast majority does well in the first quarter of the repeated year only and then falls back. The long term achievements of students who have repeated tend to be lower than for weak students who did not repeat. The effect of being labelled a 'repeater' can also have important negative consequences for the student's future school career⁹⁰.

One of the most comprehensive meta-analyses on this topic remains the work of Thomas Holmes, who in 1990 analysed 63 investigations comparing two groups of students: a control

⁸⁸ G. Bless, P. Bonvin, M. Schüpbach : *Le redoublement scolaire. Ses déterminants, son efficacité, ses conséquences* (2005), p.134.

⁸⁹ Haut Conseil de l'Éducation : *L'école primaire. Bilan des résultats de l'école* (2007), p.16.

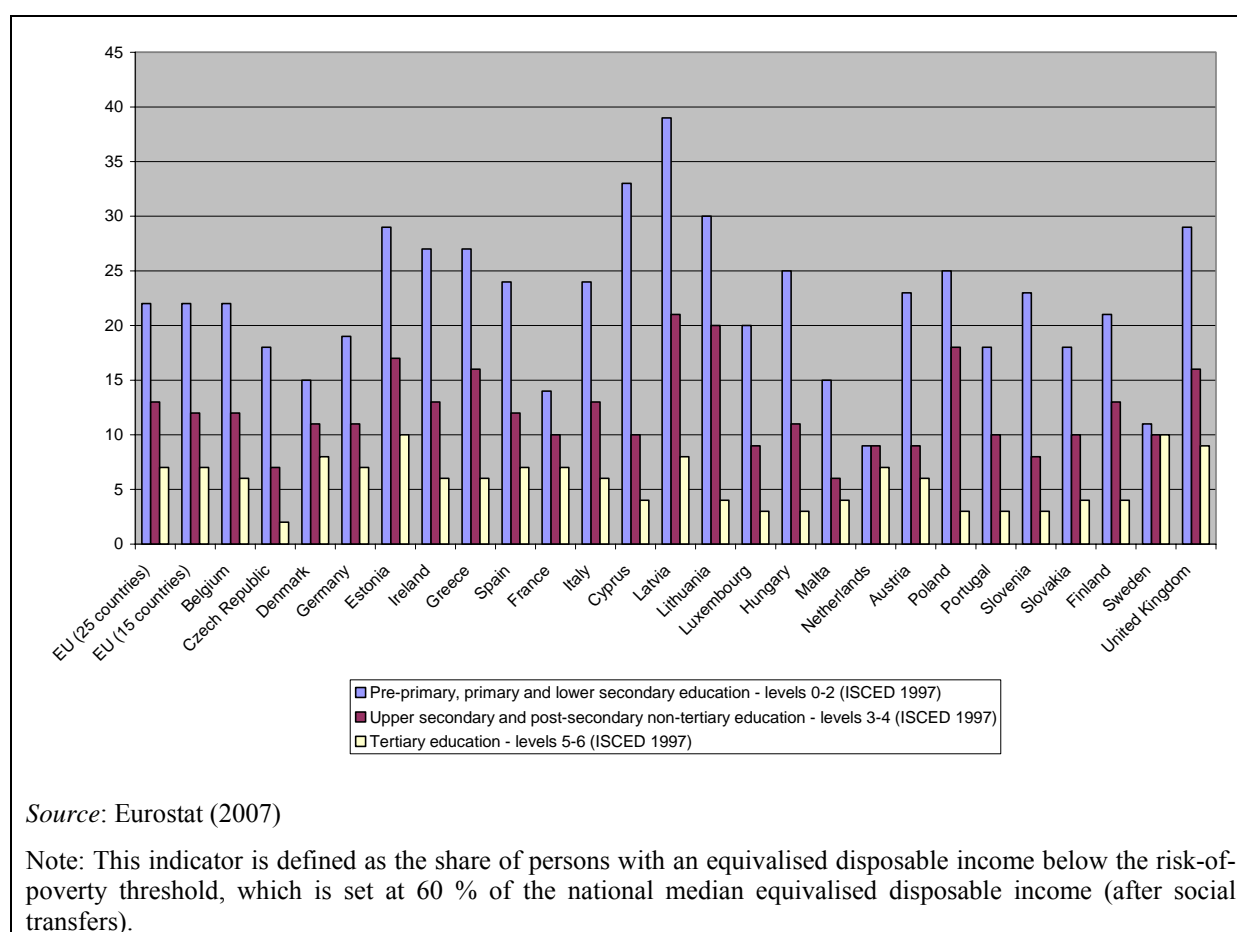
⁹⁰ W. Hutmacher : 'Quand la réalité résiste à la lutte contre l'échec scolaire', *Cahiers du service de la recherche sociologique*, 36, (1993), pp. 37-38 and pp. 145-161.

group of non-repeating weak students and a group of repeaters at different levels of primary school. His conclusion is unequivocal: ‘Those who continue to retain pupils at grade level do so despite cumulative research evidence showing that the potential for negative effects consistently outweighs positive outcomes’⁹¹. The OECD states that year repetition is often popular with teachers but that there is little evidence that it is beneficial for students. Repetition is expensive – ‘the full economic cost is up to 20 000 \$US equivalent for each student who repeats a year’⁹².

(3.10)

Chart 3.4 shows the correlations between child poverty and attainment.

Chart 3.4: At-risk-of-poverty-rate, by highest level of education attained 2006 (%)



⁹¹ C. T. Holmes, 'Grade level retention effects: A Meta-analysis of research studies' in: L. A. Shepard, M. L. Smith (eds.), *Flunking Grades. Research and policies on retention* (1990), pp. 16-33. Cited in J. J. Paul, Th. Troncin, 'Les apports de la recherche sur l'impact du redoublement comme moyen de traiter les difficultés scolaires au cours de la scolarité obligatoire' in: *Haut Conseil de l'évaluation de l'école*, N° 14 (2004). See also M. Crahay, 'Peut-on conclure à propos des effets du redoublement', *Revue Française de Pédagogie*, 148 (2005), p.14 ; and M. Crahay, *Peut-on lutter contre l'échec scolaire?* (2007).

⁹² S. Field et al, *No more failure. Ten steps to equity in education*, OECD (2007), Chapter 4, pp. 91-92.

The Commission's Bureau of European Policy Advisors (BEPA) recently reported that poor children experience a disproportionate share of deprivation, disadvantage, bad health and bad school outcomes. When they grow up, they are more likely to become unemployed, to get low paid jobs, to live in social housing, to get in trouble with the police, and are at a greater risk of alcohol and drug abuse as young adults. Moreover, in most countries, they are likely to transfer their poverty of opportunities to their own children. This has an economic, social and political cost which should be set against the public expenditure costs of early interventions (assuming such interventions can be made effective) to reduce the risks of future negative outcomes and social exclusion⁹³.

A recent report by BEPA on empowering youth highlights the following main areas in which action is required across the European Union: invest early; combine social and economic goals; co-ordinate investment across policy areas and layers; and improve information gathering and dissemination to facilitate decision-making⁹⁴.

(3.11 - 3.12)

The Cluster 'Social Inclusion' has emphasised the importance of mapping and improving preventive measures to combat disadvantage, the need to avoid a very high turnover of teachers, and to ensure that well-trained and experienced teachers are attracted to work in 'disadvantaged' schools⁹⁵.

Nevertheless schools cannot bring about change without change in the wider society. Shavit and Blossfeld showed that, in the 13 countries they studied, no attempts to redress educational inequalities solely through education policy had succeeded, and that the only two countries that had reduced inequalities had done so through the medium of wider social policies⁹⁶. Anyon, in the USA, argues that while rules and regulations regarding teaching, curriculum, and assessment are clearly important, they cannot be effective without policies to eliminate poverty-wage work and housing segregation (for example) whose consequences for urban education are at least as profound as curriculum, pedagogy, and testing⁹⁷.

Early School Leaving

(3.13 - 3.14)

Early school leaving is defined as persons aged between 16 and 24 leaving education with no more than lower secondary education, and currently participating in no form of education and training. The Commission's Staff Working Paper on efficiency and equity in European education and training systems gave an overview of literature on the costs of inequity and

⁹³ R. Liddle, F. Delais, *Europe's social reality*. A consultation paper from BEPA (2006); See also: *A thematic study to identify what policy responses are successful in preventing child poverty*, European Commission, (2006); *Study on access to education and training, basic skills and early school leavers*, European Commission, (2005) p. 9. <http://ec.europa.eu/education/doc/reports/doc/earlyleave.pdf>; Cluster on Access and Social Inclusion; *Joint Report on Social Protection and Social Inclusion*, European Council 7274/08 (2008); <http://register.consilium.europa.eu/pdf/en/08/st07/st07274.en08.pdf>

⁹⁴ *Investing in youth: an empowerment strategy*, BEPA (April 2007).

⁹⁵ Discussed at the Education Council meeting of 14.02.2008: http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/educ/98734.pdf.

⁹⁶ Y. Shavit, H. P. Blossfeld, *Persistent inequality. Changing educational attainment in thirteen countries* (1993).

⁹⁷ J. Anyon, *Radical possibilities: public policy, urban education, and a new social movement* (2006).

early school leaving in Europe⁹⁸. The above-mentioned BEPA study on youth empowerment provided further evidence about the costs of early school leaving⁹⁹. Comprehensive comparative data for the EU are however still lacking.

Reducing the rate of early school leaving to no more than 10% in 2010 is one of the five benchmarks for monitoring the progress of European education and training systems established by the European Council in 2002. In most Member States the percentage of early school leavers decreased between 2000 and 2006, but progress is not sufficient to reach the benchmark¹⁰⁰. The latest (2007) average figure for early school leavers in the EU (14.8%) is still far in excess of the benchmark (see Chart 3.5).

⁹⁸ SEC (2006) 1096, pp.12-13.

⁹⁹ *Investing in youth: an empowerment strategy*, BEPA (2007), pp. 31-32.

¹⁰⁰ SEC(2007)1284, pp. 29-35.

Chart 3.5: Early School Leavers, 2000 and 2007
 (Percentage of the population aged 18-24 with only lower secondary education and not in education or training, 2000 and 2007)



Data Source: Eurostat (EU-Labour Force Survey 2008)

Additional Notes:

Provisional 2007 data for Latvia, Portugal and Finland.

Unreliable data for Slovenia and Croatia because of the small sample size.

Break in series for Finland (2000) and Denmark (2007).

Cyprus: pupils studying abroad are not covered by the survey; this indicator is therefore overestimated.

Most research identifies a combination of several reasons, ranging from individual characteristics, education and job related reasons, family and peer relations to community and environmental reasons for early school leaving. An extensive study for the European

Commission in 2005 made clear that overall socio-economic background is one of the main determinants of early school leaving¹⁰¹.

A Commission study on policy measures concerning disadvantaged youth also examined good practice to combat early school leaving¹⁰². General measures, such as extending the age of compulsory education, removing mechanisms of selection or curricular reforms were examined, as well as school-related measures such as counselling, support teaching or the combination of non-formal learning. The study made the distinction between preventative and compensatory measures such as second chance schools. While both have a role to play, attention is increasingly shifting towards how to prevent early school leaving.

Eight Member States (Belgium, Estonia, Greece, Lithuania, Malta, the Netherlands, Portugal and Spain) set national targets for reducing early school leaving in their 2005 Lisbon National Reform Programmes. The accompanying initiatives are not focused only on curricula, but also on extracurricular activities such as sport. The countries taking action in this field are not only those with a high proportion of early school leavers but also those which have been successful in the past in reducing or limiting the phenomenon¹⁰³.

Special Educational Needs (SEN)

(3.18)

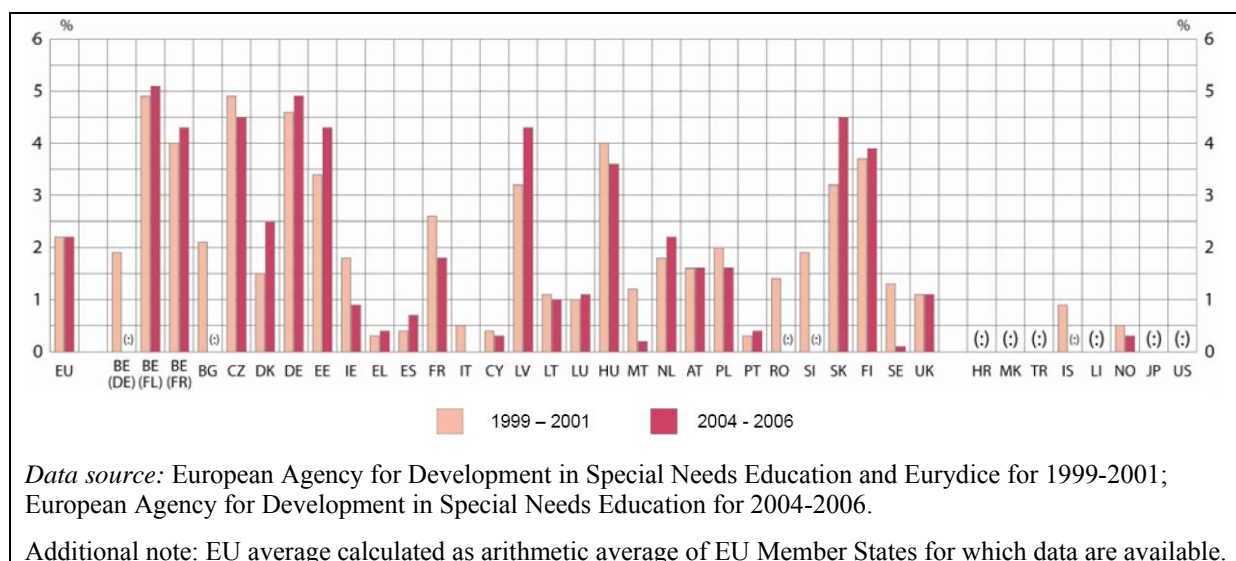
The concept of special educational needs is broad and varies from country to country. It extends beyond those who may be included in 'handicapped' categories to cover those who have many other kinds of special need. The amount and type of additional support for these groups also varies greatly from country to country. Given that the way in which SEN are defined, and consequently the types of provision available differ by country, direct comparisons between countries of the percentages of pupils in separate provision are not appropriate. However, trends in the proportion of pupils educated separately are a useful indication of developments towards inclusion for SEN pupils (see Chart 3.6).

¹⁰¹ *Study on access to education and training, basic skills and early school leavers: Early school leavers*, European Commission (2005) <http://ec.europa.eu/education/doc/reports/doc/earlyleave.pdf>

¹⁰² *Thematic study on policy measures concerning disadvantaged youth*, European Commission (2005) http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/social_inclusion/docs/youth_study_en.pdf

¹⁰³ SEC(2007)1284, p. 33.

Chart 3.6: Percentage of pupils in compulsory education with special needs in segregated settings, 1999/2001 – 2004/2006



With very few exceptions, these trends show only very moderate change and no clear pattern emerges in Europe. The number of countries showing an increase in the proportion of SEN pupils in separate provision is similar to those showing a decrease, with several countries showing no changes, or almost none, in these proportions over this time period¹⁰⁴.

Several political documents have argued in the last decade for the benefits of inclusive education for children with special educational needs. The Salamanca Statement in 1994 (signed by 92 governments and 25 organisations), inter alia, called upon all governments to 'adopt as a matter of law or policy the principle of inclusive education, enrolling all children in regular schools, unless there are compelling reasons for doing otherwise'¹⁰⁵.

In September 2007 a European Hearing attended by young people with special educational needs from 29 countries, from secondary, vocational and higher education, in the framework of the Portuguese Presidency of the Council, resulted in a declaration stating 'it is very important to give everyone the freedom to choose where they want to be educated; inclusive education is best if the conditions are right for us; we see a lot of benefits in inclusive education: we acquire more social skills; we live wider experiences; we learn about how to manage in the real world; we need to have and interact with friends with and without special needs; inclusive education with individualised, specialised support is the best preparation for higher education; specialised centres would be of help to support us and to inform universities properly about the help we require; inclusive education is mutually beneficial to us and to everyone'¹⁰⁶.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities was adopted on 13 December 2006 and declares that 'persons with disabilities can access an inclusive, quality

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.: Between 1999 and 2006, no overall progress was made towards greater inclusion of pupils with special needs; the proportion of such pupils educated in special settings decreased in 11, but increased in 12 out of 25 countries.

¹⁰⁵ Salamanca statement and framework for action on special needs education (1994), p. ix.

¹⁰⁶ Lisbon Declaration: Young People's Views on Inclusive Education, (2007), p.1.

and free primary education and secondary education on an equal basis with others in the communities in which they live.'

In 2007 a Declaration of the European Parliament called for a charter on 'dys' children (defined as children with disability such as dysphasia, dyspraxia, dyslexia, dyscalculia or attention deficit disorder, etc.). The purpose of such charter would be to: promote best practice in making information accessible for people with disabilities, promote the use of effective pedagogies and early intervention strategies; and promote the integration of such children into the world of work¹⁰⁷.

A literature review by the European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education has sought to map good classroom practices on inclusive education in primary and secondary settings by collecting existing practices and analysing their impact. The practices it investigated were: cooperative teaching, peer tutoring and cooperative learning, curriculum-based measurement, collaborative problem solving and mixed designs¹⁰⁸.

To date, quantitative information about the benefits of inclusive education for all is scarce. Further analysis is needed. In a recent publication on SEN students the OECD pointed out that so far the work on SEN students has been determined by the availability of data¹⁰⁹. However, for future comparative work it is crucial to collect systematically economic data and data on outcomes for SEN students. The publication also calls for the need to include SEN students in the future rounds of PISA. OECD has recently started a new study that aims to examine issues of transition of SEN students into further and higher education and the labour market. Within the context of transitions OECD is also planning to focus in the future on the question of how enabling or disabling schools are in securing the continuity of the education of SEN students.

School development

(3.19 - 3.21)

Effective school improvement is high on most countries' educational agenda¹¹⁰.

A recent European research project conducted an extensive analysis of some 30 school improvement projects in eight countries (The Netherlands, Finland, United Kingdom, Belgium-French Community, Greece, Italy, Spain, and Portugal)¹¹¹. The research showed that the accent is often on teacher quality, which is certainly an important factor; but individual teachers cannot in isolation produce high levels of performance for all students of a school nor promote lasting changes within their schools. It is essential to consider the school as a whole, i.e. as an organisation. The organisation may add or subtract value to that of its individual members. The study claims that outside pressure is needed for schools to change. It distinguished four main types: market mechanism, external evaluation and accountability,

¹⁰⁷ Written declaration of the European Parliament on "dys" crimination and social exclusion affecting children with "dys" abilities, (0064/2007).

¹⁰⁸ C.J.W Meier, *Inclusive education and effective classroom practices*, EADSNE (2001), pp. 31-32.

¹⁰⁹ *Students with disabilities, learning difficulties and disadvantages. Policies, statistics and indicators*, OECD (2007), pp. 215-224.

¹¹⁰ Also at the level of the European Schools, reform of their governance arrangements is currently underway and access to the European Baccalaureat is being widened to other school types.

¹¹¹ See project within the fourth EU framework programme for research: 'Capacity for change and adaptation of schools in the case of effective school improvement' (July 2001).

<http://www.pjb.co.uk/npl/bp27.htm>

external agents, such as inspectors, and participation of society in education and societal changes. Schools – and indeed school education systems - are often not organised appropriately to respond to a fast-changing environment. The study identified three material and non-material kinds of support that might contribute to school improvement: granting a certain level of autonomy to schools, financial resources and working conditions and local support from parents, district officials, school administrators and school boards.

Increasingly, the evidence points to the potential of 'learning communities' to generate the capacity for school improvement. Such communities offer opportunities for teachers to work together without being dependent upon external initiatives or interventions¹¹². However, much depends upon a school's internal capacity to become a learning community in the first place. It is clear that not all schools have this capacity, suggesting that those schools which would benefit most from teachers working together may be those least able to make this happen.

Recent studies therefore emphasise that school improvement programmes have to be related to capacity building; thus there should be more emphasis on sophisticated training, coaching and development programmes for practitioners and the use of external support agencies¹¹³. They emphasise that schools and school systems facing organisational challenges emphasise in one way or another that real change in schools requires the development of strong professional communities¹¹⁴. Two ways of building capacity are through internal collaboration or school-to-school collaboration¹¹⁵.

Several European research projects on school effectiveness suggest that a combination of external mechanisms and institutional autonomy is most effective in bringing about improvements in local contexts¹¹⁶. The importance of local and national contexts is such that there is unlikely to be a single recipe for change. Moreover, even with the appropriate framework of external mechanisms, improvement takes time¹¹⁷. These conclusions are confirmed by the results of the ESI (Effective School Improvement) survey¹¹⁸.

Much research emphasises the important role of parents and the wider social community in school improvement¹¹⁹.

¹¹² See report of the Cluster 'Teachers and Trainers': 'Schools as learning communities for their teachers.' http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/2010/doc/reportpeer2_en.pdf

¹¹³ A. Harris, C. Chapman, *Effective leadership in schools facing challenging circumstances* (2002); L. Stool, D. Fink, *Changing our schools: linking school effectiveness and school improvement* (1996).

¹¹⁴ See the policy conclusions of the Cluster 'Teachers and Trainers' http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/2010/doc/reportpeer5_en.pdf; see also K. S. Louis –S. Kruse (eds.): *Professionalism and community: Perspectives on reforming urban schools* (1995); L Stoll, K. Seashore Louis, *Professional learning communities* (2007), and R. Bolam et al (eds.), *Creating and sustaining professional learning communities*, Research Report (2005); J. Cibulka, S. Coursey, M. Nakayama, J. Price, S. Stewart, *Schools as learning organisations: A review of the literature*, NCSL, UK, (2003).

¹¹⁵ See A. Bolivar, 'Capacity-building as a means to empower schools', Paper presented at the EU presidency conference on 'Schools facing up to new challenges' (November 2007) P. M. Senge, *The fifth discipline. The art and practice of the learning organisation* (1990); R. Glatter, 'Schools and school systems facing complexity: organisational challenges', Paper presented at the EU presidency conference in Lisbon on 'Schools facing up to new challenges in the 21st century' (November 2007).

¹¹⁶ S. Power, *Education. Policy Synthesis of EU research results*. Series N° 4 (2007), p. 24.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Survey conducted across three countries: UK, Spain, Netherlands.

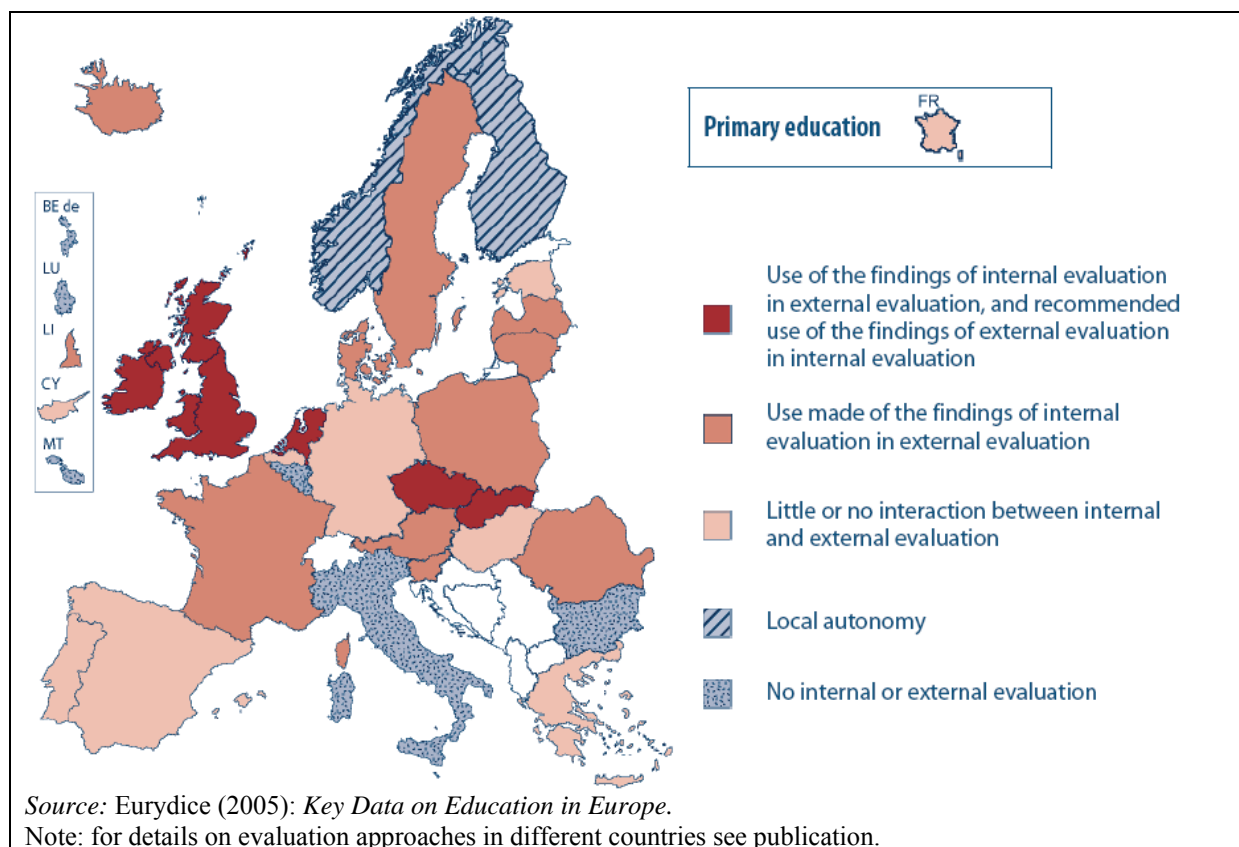
¹¹⁹ J. S. Coleman, 'Social capital in the creation of human capital', *American Journal of Sociology Supplement* 94 (1988); R. D. Putman, 'Education, diversity, social cohesion and 'social capital' – note

The project 'Legal Framework for New Governance and Modern Policy Education throughout Europe' sought to identify the impact of new accountability mechanism on schools through a comparative study of 26 national systems based on expert accounts, analysis of legal frameworks and questionnaire survey. It found that systemic and cyclical self evaluation appears to be an effective tool for providing schools with the means of identifying areas of improvement and directions for change¹²⁰.

(3.22)

The complementary nature of external and internal evaluation raises important questions about who the players are, who sets the standards for the procedures and what happens to the findings (see Chart 3.7). The general tendency is to introduce external evaluation involving judgements about performance and means, and internal evaluation for developing strategies to improve the current situation, while either approach may identify precisely those aspects that require improvement.

Chart 3.7: Relations between the internal and external evaluation of schools as entities, compulsory general education, 2002/03

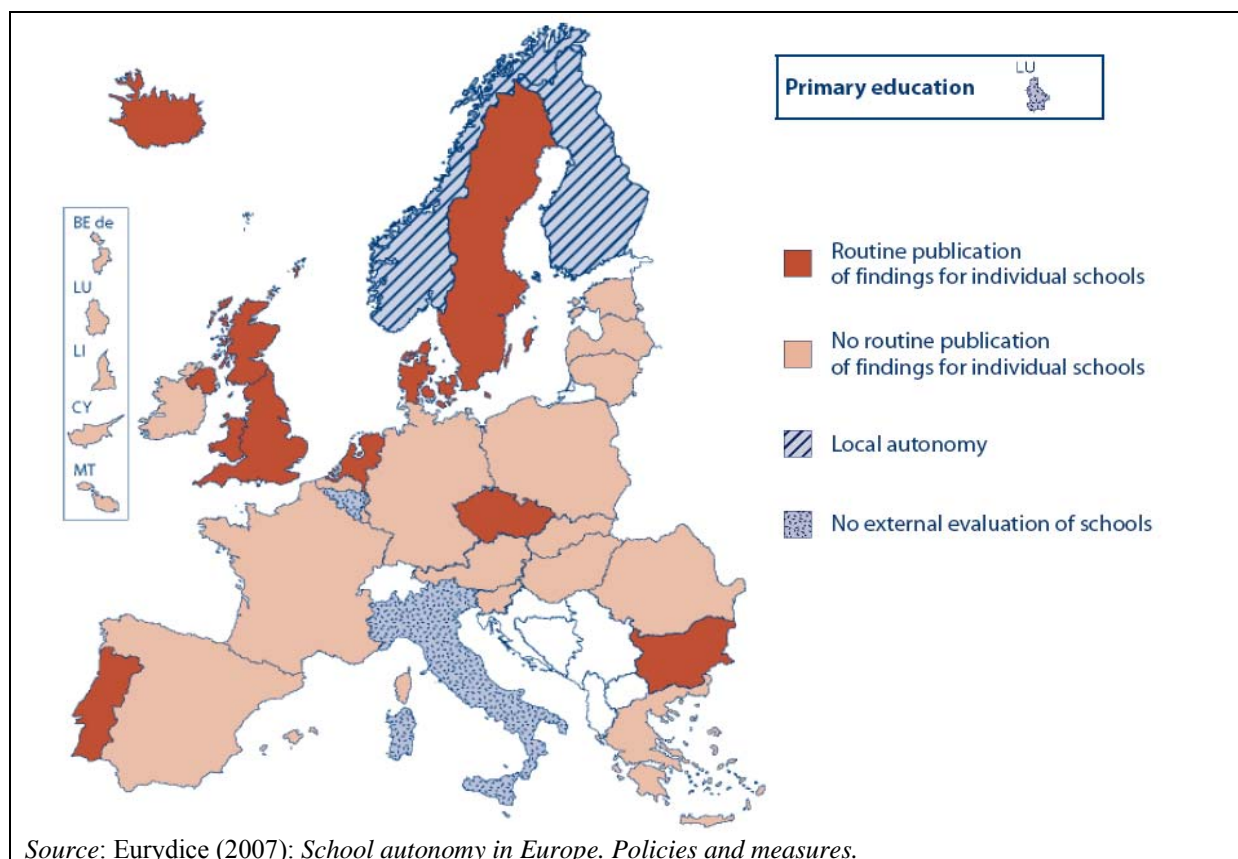


A recent Eurydice study on school autonomy attempted to make correlations between autonomy and accountability (see Chart 3.8). It notes that from the middle of the 1990s the concept of accountability became increasingly important and assumed different forms in different countries. These new models of accountability usually represent an adjustment of

¹²⁰ for discussion', OECD Education Ministers meeting Dublin 'Raising the quality of learning for all' (March 18-19, 2004).
 S. Power, *Education, Policy Synthesis of EU research results*. Series N° 4 (2007), p. 23.

evaluation instruments that were either already in place (school inspectorates, for example) or were developed to meet broader objectives, such as standardized assessment of pupil attainment.

Chart 3.8: Publication of findings from the external evaluation of schools, compulsory general education 2006/07



The study concludes that, 'supervision by inspectorates or organising bodies (including local authorities) or the monitoring of results (in particular the results of pupils in standardised tests) do not equate to a particular degree of autonomy. Countries with a high level of autonomy (Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Sweden, etc.) draw on all these different types of control. This diversity is explained by the fact that traditional methods of supervision (inspection of teachers for example) have been adapted to accommodate the new responsibilities delegated to schools'¹²¹.

It is rare for countries to have developed, as in the United Kingdom (England), accountability measures in tandem with school autonomy policies and in relation to the degree of freedom granted. However, all countries where there is a high level of autonomy have developed forms of accountability which vary considerably in their level of control. Conversely, the countries which do not have a structured model of school evaluation are those where school autonomy reforms have been developed fairly recently, only partially or are weak (Bulgaria, Greece, France, Italy, etc.). However, this approach to accountability has begun to emerge in a few of

¹²¹ *School autonomy in Europe. Policies and measures*, Eurydice (2008), p. 46.

these countries. Italy, for example, has recently decided to develop evaluation instruments to measure the value added by each school in terms of pupil attainment¹²².

Recent studies on the relationship between school accountability, autonomy, choice, equity, and student achievements, suggest that school autonomy may be more beneficial in systems where external exams introduce accountability and external exams change the behaviour not only of students, but also of teachers and school¹²³. The analysis of the 2006 PISA results seems to corroborate this result. Further research is needed to determine the precise mechanisms at work.

4. TEACHERS AND SCHOOL STAFF

Teacher Competences and Qualifications

(4.1 – 4.2)

Within the Education and Training 2010 work programme, a group of national experts on teacher and trainer education prepared ‘Common European Principles for Teacher Competences and Qualifications’, a statement of basic principles on the competences and qualifications required by teachers and trainers. This was validated by a Stakeholder conference in July 2005¹²⁴.

Following on from this work, the European Commission in August 2007 published a Communication ‘Improving the Quality of Teacher Education’¹²⁵. This identified the quality of teaching and Teacher Education as key factors in securing the quality of education and improving the educational attainment of young people.

The Commission’s proposals were based upon research showing, inter alia, that: teacher quality is the most important within-school factor affecting student performance¹²⁶; there are positive relationships between in-service training and student achievement¹²⁷; the amount of in-service training available to practising teachers in the EU is very limited, generally amounting to less than 20 hours per year; only half of Member States offer new teachers any systematic kind of support in their first years of teaching; and that explicit frameworks to

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ L. Wößmann, 'The complementarity of central exams and school autonomy: economic theory and international evidence', in: J. de Groof, C. Glenn, E. Gori, D. Vidoni (eds.), 'Quality control, accountability and liability in education' (2005); idem, 'Contribution of Education and Training to innovation and growth', Paper presented at the Symposium on the future perspectives of Education and Training for growth, jobs and social cohesion (June 2007); G. Schütz, M. R. West, L. Wößmann, 'School accountability, autonomy, choice, and the equity of student achievement from PISA 2003', OECD Working papers, EDU/WKP 9 (2007).

¹²⁴ Common European Principles for Teacher Competences and Qualifications http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/2010/doc/principles_en.pdf
¹²⁵ COM(2007)392 final.

¹²⁶ S. G. Rivkin, E. A. Hanushek, J. F. Kain, 'Teachers, schools and academic achievement', *National Bureau of Economic Research* (2000); E. A. Hanushek, J. F. Kain, S. G. Rivkin, 'Teachers, schools, and academic achievement', *Econometrica*, 73/ 2 (March, 2005), pp. 417–458

¹²⁷ J. D. Angrist, V. Lavy, 'Does teacher training affect pupil learning? Evidence from matched comparisons in Jerusalem public schools?', *Journal of Labor Economics*, 19/ 2 (Apr., 2001), pp. 343-369.

assist teachers who experience difficulties in performing their duties adequately exist in only one third of countries¹²⁸.

The Communication made proposals to: ensure that provision for teachers' education and professional development is coordinated, coherent, and adequately resourced; ensure that all teachers possess the knowledge, attitudes and pedagogic skills that they require to be effective; support the professionalisation of teaching; promote a culture of reflective practice and research within the teaching profession; and promote the status and recognition of the profession. The Communication was the basis for the subsequent Council Conclusions on the same topic¹²⁹.

Within the Education and Training 2010 programme, work on Teacher Education is being carried forward by the Cluster 'Teachers and Trainers', who publish detailed reports of their peer-learning activities, and conclusions about policies for improving Teacher Education¹³⁰.

The Commission Staff Working Document 'Towards more knowledge-based policy and practice in education and training' emphasised teachers' roles in the creation and application of knowledge¹³¹. It advocated that teachers should receive adequate training in research methods, and incentives to undertake research and action research throughout their careers, seeing this as part of professional good practice.

The Commission in 2006 commissioned a study on the mobility of teachers and trainers in the European Union¹³². The study identifies, for each country, the number of teaching posts (FTE) in 2004¹³³ and the age and gender profile of the teaching profession is analysed¹³⁴. The study also identifies the trends in teacher numbers based upon a number of factors. It predicts the likely effects of different policy scenarios on those numbers¹³⁵. Data on the age profile of the teaching profession in each country are provided by Eurostat. On average in EU Member States, 30% of teachers are in the over-50 age group. This equates to some 1,972,271 teachers who can be expected to need to be replaced over the next 10 to 15 years.

(4.4)

A recent study by McKinsey & Co. on the common characteristics of most successful school systems highlights the central role of teachers, asserting that 'the quality of an education system cannot exceed the quality of its teachers' and that 'the only way to improve outcomes is to improve instruction'¹³⁶. The OECD's thematic review on the teaching profession emphasised the importance of the quality of teaching, the need to align teacher development and performance better with school needs, and the need to transform teaching into a

¹²⁸ *Key data on Education in Europe*, Eurydice (2005), pp. 185-232.

¹²⁹ OJ C 300/07 of 15.11.2007.

¹³⁰ Teacher and Trainer Education: Policy conclusions and recommendations from peer learning activities 2005 – 2007; http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/2010/objectives_en.html
¹³¹ SEC(2007)1098, p. 55.

¹³² *Mobility of teachers and trainers*. A report submitted by GHK to the European Commission (2006)
<http://ec.europa.eu/education/doc/reports/doc/mobility.pdf>.

¹³³ Ibid., Table 3.2, p. 21.

¹³⁴ Ibid., Section 3.4, from p. 25 onwards and annexes.

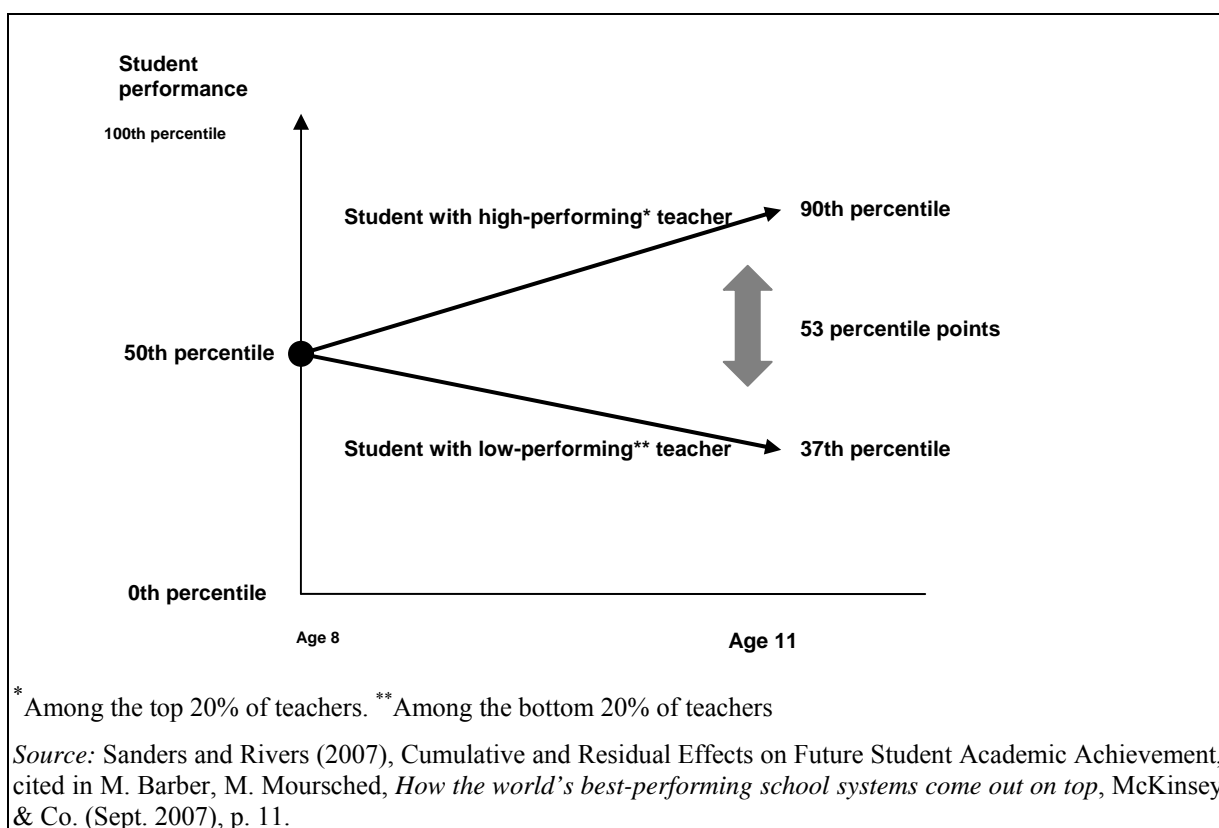
¹³⁵ Ibid., Section 8, from p. 156 onwards.

¹³⁶ M. Barber, M. Moursched, *How the world's best-performing school systems come out on top*, McKinsey & Co. (Sept. 2007).

knowledge-rich profession. It also underlined that it is crucial that schools have genuine responsibility for teacher personal management in which leadership plays a crucial role¹³⁷.

Chart 4.1 shows that teacher quality has a significant effect on student performance, more than any other variable. On average, the performance of two students of average performance (50th percentile) diverged by more than 50 percentile points over a three year period depending on the teacher they were assigned.

Chart 4.1: The effect of teacher quality



As far as the quality of teachers and teaching are concerned, the study notes that in the top performing systems: there are multiple pathways into the teaching profession; low performing teachers are removed from the classroom; there are effective mechanisms for allocating places on teacher training programmes to well-motivated high achievers with good communication skills; starting remuneration is in line with other graduates' starting salaries; the status of the profession is carefully managed. Effective and successful systems promote good interaction between teachers and students by: coaching classroom practice, developing strong school leaders and enabling teachers to learn from each other¹³⁸.

¹³⁷ *Teachers matter: attracting, developing and retaining effective teachers*, OECD (2005).

¹³⁸ M. Barber, M. Moursched, *How the world's best-performing school systems come out on top*, McKinsey & Co. (Sept. 2007), p. 38.

School Leadership

(4.5 - 4.6)

Several studies on school improvement point to the fact that effective leadership is central in implementing and sustaining school improvement¹³⁹. Those studies that see a close relationship between effective school leadership and student outcomes advocate the need for developing shared vision, distributing leadership and building the school culture necessary to current restructuring efforts in schools¹⁴⁰.

The recent OECD study *Improving School Leadership: Policy and Practice* identifies four core functions for leadership: supporting, evaluating and developing teacher quality; goal setting, assessment and accountability; strategic resource management; leadership beyond school borders¹⁴¹.

Leadership in this context is primarily about managing the conditions under which people learn new practices; creating organisations that are supportive, coherent environments for successful practice; and developing leadership skills of others. Elmore explains how leadership might be defined more clearly as a collective good; it should be treated as a human investment enterprise, which has three important characteristics: it focuses on the practice of improving the quality of instruction and the performance of students; it treats leadership as a distributed function rather than a role based activity, and it requires more or less continuous investment in knowledge and skills¹⁴².

Senge views leadership and leaders at the centre of the learning organisation where they are designers, stewards and teachers¹⁴³.

For Hopkins, 'system leaders' are those head-teachers who are willing to shoulder system leadership roles: who care about and work for the success of other schools as well as their own¹⁴⁴.

The OECD concludes that 'evidence shows that principals have a *measurable, mostly indirect influence* on learning outcomes'¹⁴⁵. This implies that the impact of school leaders on student

¹³⁹ D. Vidoni, L. Grasseti, C. Bezzina, D. Gattelli (eds.), *The role of school leadership on student achievement: evidence from TIMSS 2003*, unpublished (2007), pp. 33-39. It gives an overview of the literature on the subject since the 1960s.

¹⁴⁰ K. Leithwood, D. Jantzi, R. Steinbech, *Changing leadership for changing times* (1999)

¹⁴¹ *Improving school leadership*, OECD (2008), pp. 32-48.

¹⁴² R. F. Elmore, 'Leadership as the practice of improvement' Paper presented at the International Conference of OECD, 'International perspectives on school leadership for systemic improvement' (July 2006).

¹⁴³ P. Senge, *The fifth discipline. The art and practice of the learning organisation* (1990), p. 340.

¹⁴⁴ D. Hopkins, 'Short primer on system leadership', Paper presented at the International Conference of OECD, 'International perspectives on school leadership for systemic improvement' (July 2006), p.8.; *Ibid.*, p. 13. see D. Hopkins (ed.), *Innovative approaches to contemporary school leadership*, OECD,(forthcoming), and the system leadership series led by Professor Hopkins on <http://www.ssatinet.net/events/futureevents/systemleadershipseries.aspx>

¹⁴⁵ *Improving school leadership*, OECD (2008), p. 8. and P. Hallinger, R. Heck, 'Exploring the principal's contribution to school effectiveness: 1980- 1995', *School Effectiveness and School Improvement*, 9 (1998), pp. 157-191.

learning is generally mediated by other people, events and organisational factors such as teachers, classroom practices and school climate.

According to Spillane et al. distributed leadership incorporates the activities of multiple groups of individuals in a school guiding and mobilising staff in the instructional change process through inter-dependency rather than dependency¹⁴⁶.

Silins and Mulford conclude that student outcomes are more likely to improve where leadership sources are distributed throughout the school community and where teachers are empowered in areas of importance to them. They argue that teachers cannot create and sustain the conditions for the productive development of children if those conditions do not exist for teachers. If schools are to become better at providing learning for students, they must also become better at providing opportunities for teachers to innovate, develop and learn together¹⁴⁷.

Timperley and Spillane have investigated links between distributed leadership and school success¹⁴⁸. They suggest that while traditional approaches to leadership recommend that organisational and instructional coherence can be established by creating a strong vision for a school that pervades the organisational culture, distributed leadership focuses on the things people do to enact those visions and create coherence.

¹⁴⁶ J. Spillane, R. Halverson, J. Diamond, 'Towards a theory of school leadership practice: implications of distributed perspective', *Journal of Curriculum Studies* 36/1 (2004), pp. 3-34.

¹⁴⁷ H. Silins, B. Mulford, 'Leadership and schools results', in: K. Leithwood, P. Hallinger (eds.), *Second international handbook of educational leadership and administration* (2002), pp. 561-612.

¹⁴⁸ J. Spillane, *Distributed leadership* (2006); H. S. Timperly, 'Distributed leadership: developing theory from practice', *Journal of Curriculum Studies* 37/4,(2005), pp. 395-420; H. Timperley, A. Wilson, H. Barrar, I. Fung, *Teacher professional learning and development: best evidence synthesis iteration* (2007).

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